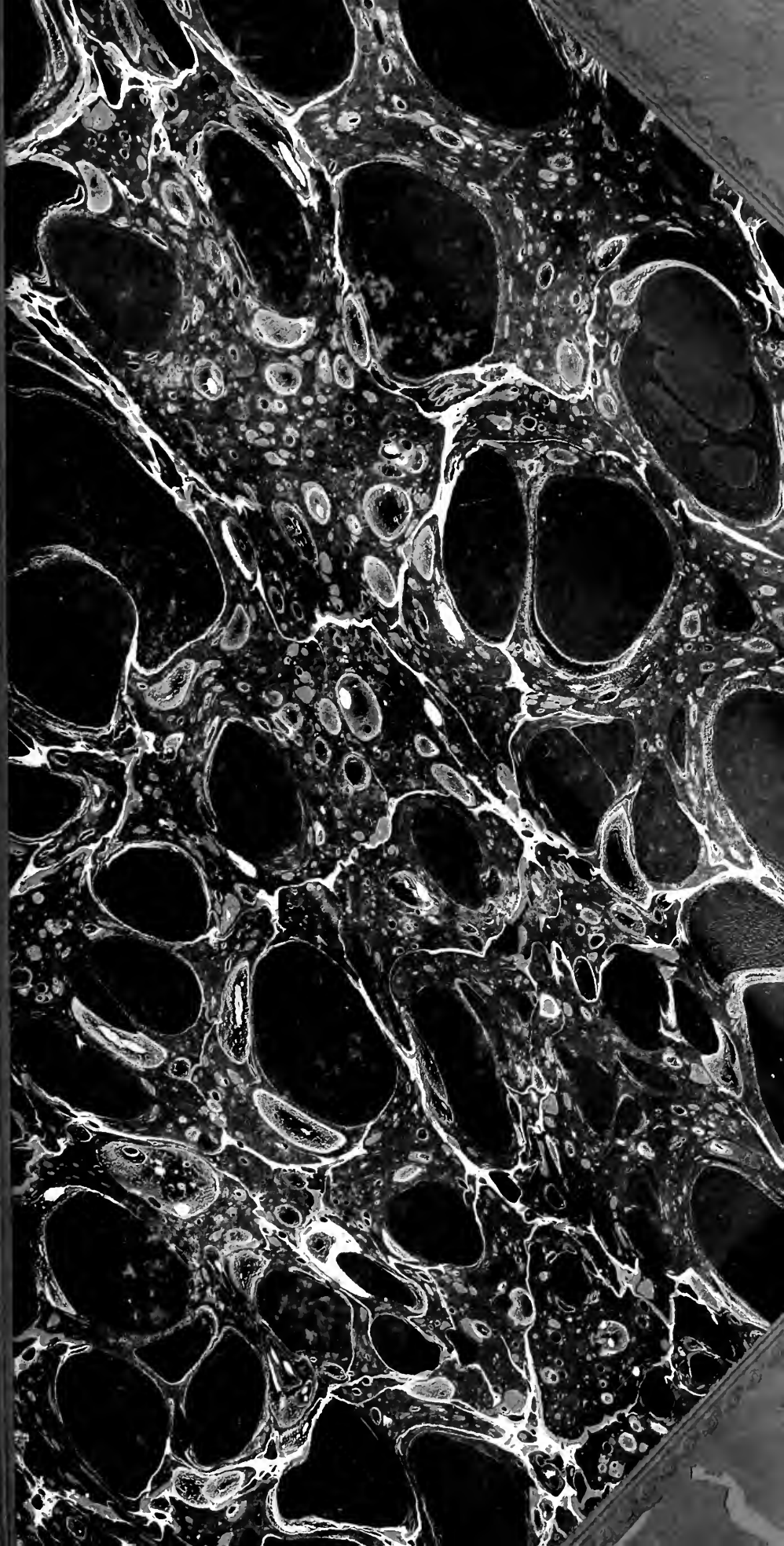




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"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE
ARGOSY.

EDITED BY
CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME XLVIII.

July to December, 1889.

RICHARD BENTLEY & SON,
8, NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

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LONDON :
PRINTED BY J. OGDEN AND CO. LIMITED,
GREAT SAFFRON HILL, E.C.

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"As Reuben read, the burden seemed to fall from his shoulders."

"Then I hope you will appreciate prison fare, and find your new quarters comfortable."

"It is my brother—it is Rex."

Between the Lights.

The Heights from Milan Cathedral.

A Poet's Place.

The Harvest of the Sea.

Illustrations to A Week in Jersey—"Ecco Roma!"—In Sunny Climes—
Modern Babylon.

THE ARGOSY.

JULY, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR MARGARET."

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. RYOT-TEMPEST DRAWS THE LINE.

MR. RYOT-TEMPEST was exceedingly particular about his letters ; he could not bear anyone to see even the outsides of his own, though he carefully examined the post-marks of everyone else's. He had a post-bag at Woodford, of course, and it had been one of the minor trials of his life since the parcels post had been introduced, that he had been obliged to submit to the separate delivery of all parcels too large to be accommodated in the post-bag.

On his return from his honeymoon almost his first action was to go to the post-office and give directions that for the future all large parcels should be delivered in a large basket which had been received there, and freely commented on, a few days before. Much speculation as to its probable use had exercised the postmistress, who took as kind and deep an interest in the letters, post-cards and telegrams which passed through her hands as country postmistresses usually do. This basket was duly provided with a padlock and two keys, one of which Mr. Ryot-Tempest handed to the postmistress, and one he carefully fastened on his own private bunch.

"You'll be wanting an extra key for the post-bag now, sir, won't you?" asked the woman, who was anxious to discover on whose behalf this basket was introduced.

"No," said Mr. Ryot-Tempest briefly ; "but be careful that all the letters are sent in it. And when there are parcels send word, and my man shall call for the basket."

To explain why these precautions were taken, we must return with Mr. Ryot-Tempest to Paris after that brief interruption to the conjugal bliss of his honeymoon.

His welcome was as warm as he could wish, and it was a flattering

unction to lay to his soul that his absence had been as great a trial as his wife represented. It is so nice to be missed ; so delightful to persuade ourselves that no one else can supply our place. But oh ! remember it is so seldom true. There are, perhaps, two or three people in the world who would really miss us if we went over to the majority to-morrow ; two or three in the corner of whose hearts no one else could fit in quite so comfortably as we do ; but don't let us flatter ourselves there are more than two or three to whom our loss would be a life-long sorrow. Time has wonderful healing powers—it is a universal balsam for all ills.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest's first inquiry, after he had given an account of his mission, and a few tender passages had taken place, was for his letters.

"There have been none," was the reply of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"Dear me, how very strange. I am expecting one from George. I must make inquiries."

"Surely there can be no need to do that ; the waiter would have brought it had it arrived," objected Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"He might not ; and it is a very important one."

"I will go and ask them," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who knew more about the missing letter than she cared to acknowledge.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest said no more when she returned to tell him no letter had arrived, but he sat down at once and wrote to his brother asking him if he had written to him to the effect stated by Captain Raleigh. He did this not because he doubted Captain Raleigh, but because he intended to sift the matter of the missing letter to the bottom ; it would afford him some occupation when sight-seeing palled. The next day he had a telegram from Captain Tempest, saying he had written five days ago to the present address, asking his consent to Vera's immediate marriage.

"It is very singular ; most irregular. I must go to the post-office at once, and institute inquiries," said Mr. Ryot-Tempest, handing the telegram to his wife.

"What a fuss you make about that letter," she exclaimed, irritably. "Now I think of it, there *was* a letter from your brother. It came while you were away, so I opened it, and, finding it was some wild-goose scheme about allowing Vera to marry that flirting Romanist at once, I burnt it. I thought it would only distress and worry you. And you know, Ryot, darling, you must let your Poppy share your troubles now," she added in her sweetest tone, as she rubbed her forehead caressingly against his waistcoat, taking care that none of the powder on her face was disturbed.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest was very much annoyed, but he was too much afraid of his charmer to dare to show his annoyance. That anyone, even the wife of his bosom, should have presumed to open one of his letters was almost incredible, and he inwardly vowed that though marriage might entitle his Poppy to share his troubles, it should not

give her the right to share his letters. Hence his institution of a basket for parcels, and his refusal to have a second key to the post-bag. With all his failings, Mr. Ryot-Tempest was a gentleman and an honourable man, as incapable of opening another person's letters as he was of reading his Homer in the original. To find that his new wife could be guilty of such conduct was a shock to him, but she had cast a glamour over him with her flattering speeches and soft, purring ways, and he comforted himself with that old libel on the weaker sex, that woman's code of honour is laxer than man's, and, therefore, he must judge her charitably.

He did ; but all the same, he took good care she should not have the opportunity of offending in that way again ; so he removed the temptation. And Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, perfectly aware why the basket had been instituted, and why no key of the post-bag was offered to her when she got home, had the grace to feel too much ashamed of herself to raise any objection.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest was very much inclined to agree to Captain Raleigh's request, and consent to Vera's marriage. He began to fear complications would arise if his sincere and truth-loving Vera discovered that her step-mother's code of honour was less strict than her own ; and he would certainly be consulting his own peace of mind if he consented, for he was sure that the wife of his youth, the real love of his life, would have desired it. The wife of his middle age, however, took a different view, and appealed so cunningly, first to his conscience, and then to his ambition, urging first how wrong it would be to let Vera marry "a Romanist," and then how unwise, seeing that the promised archdeaconry would never be his if he did so, that at last she succeeded in making him refuse to consent. Her sole motive in this was jealousy. She would really have greatly preferred to be rid of Vera, but she was determined Captain Raleigh should not marry her, and equally determined that someone else should before long, and rid her of a step-daughter. Match-making was one of her accomplishments, and with such good material to work upon she did not expect to experience much difficulty in finding a husband for Vera. But up to the time of Vera's return, which took place a week after that of the bride and bridegroom, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had not decided who this happy man was to be.

Indeed, her time and thoughts had been much occupied with more serious subjects. Her first Sunday in Woodford church had convinced her how much there was which needed reform. In the first place there were Mr. Ryot-Tempest's surplices. These were of the old-fashioned sort, and were very full, and so long that they reached to his ankles and quite hid his new cassock. Accordingly, on Monday morning all the surplices were sent for and cut nearly a yard shorter ; a width was taken out ; and when Vera returned a week later, she found her step-mother engaged in re-hemming them.

Vera said nothing, but her private opinion was that her father

would never put one of these short surplices on. She was therefore neither surprised nor shocked when the following Sunday Mr. Ryot-Tempest appeared in the reading-desk in the black gown which he wore when he preached, chiefly because it had been worn by his predecessor, and he was very conservative in all his ways. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was amazed, and the shock to her nervous system was so great that before the Psalms were concluded she collapsed and was obliged to leave the church. But she looked so exceedingly unlike fainting that Vera did not think it incumbent on her to follow her ; particularly as she knew the black gown was the cause of her indisposition.

When Mr. Ryot-Tempest returned from church, he found his wife lying on the sofa, a gold-topped smelling-bottle on her lap, and a bottle of eau-de-cologne by her side.

"My dear Poppy, are you ill?"

"The heat overpowered me, but I am feeling better. Ryot, what possessed you to appear in church in that dreadful black gown?"

"That dreadful black gown, my dear Poppy, is, you are aware, the only legal vestment. Still, I should have conformed to the usual custom and worn my surplice, had I not discovered that by some mistake my night-shirt had been substituted for my surplice. No doubt the laundress is the culprit."

"Your night-shirt, Ryot! how can you be so ridiculous! Your night-shirts are not made of French cambric. Has my week's work met with no better return than this? Your surplices were simply intolerable; they would be absurd on a man six feet high; on you they were ridiculous. So I have altered them all for you, and made them the proper length, and I hope you'll wear one this evening, and preach in it."

"But, my dear Poppy, surely if that was a surplice, it is much too short. It is like a Roman Catholic priest's surplice; it really is. I—I—should be afraid my congregation will think I am not a safe man if I wear it."

"Nonsense, Ryot. I insist. And mind you discard that black gown and preach in your surplice for the future, like everyone else."

"No, Poppy, no. Let us compromise the matter. I'll wear the surplice in the reading-desk, to please you; but you must let me wear the black gown in the pulpit, to please myself and the congregation who are used to it."

"We need not discuss it any further now, please; my head aches. I am not equal to an argument. I am disappointed that my week's work has had so little result."

"Don't say that! It has had one result: it has shown me how much you are interested in my work."

"Yes; I am indeed. Ryot, I hardly like to ask you, but would you mind having daily service in future? I—I—miss it so very much; and though, of course, one should not act from worldly

motives, I am sure it would make a favourable impression on the Bishop."

"Isn't daily service just a little extreme? Isn't it the thin end of the wedge? Otherwise, if you wish it, of course I will have it."

"I do wish it. You might announce it this evening, Ryot, dear," drawing one of her husband's hands into her own, with a caressing movement.

"Yes, dear, certainly. What time is it to be?" replied the Rector, yielding to the caress and the request.

"At eight o'clock in the morning; then it does not interfere with the arrangements for the day; and it does away with any need for family prayers, as the servants can take it in turns to attend the service."

So that evening Mr. Ryot-Tempest wore the short surplice, and gave out that for the future there would be daily prayer at eight o'clock every morning; but when he went into the vestry to don his black gown, before mounting the pulpit, that ancient vestment had disappeared, and, nolens volens, he preached in his surplice.

And Mrs. Ryot-Tempest went to bed feeling she had done a very good day's work. She had abolished the black gown, reformed the surplice, and instituted daily service at a stroke. But wasn't it just a little odd that since she valued daily service so much she made no attempt to attend it, but did her church-going by proxy; religiously sending her maid every morning, much to that damsel's indignation.

There were other matters that needed reforming in the church, but Mrs. Ryot-Tempest rested on her oars for a little while, and turned her attention to domestic reforms. Elated with her success with her husband, she began on Monday morning to reform Vera. But here she had reckoned without her host, as the sequel proved.

Vera had always been in the habit, when at home, of riding without a groom. It was not correct, but she was so well known in the neighbourhood that she did not think it mattered. Moreover, her dislike to Mark Brown prevented her from allowing him to accompany her.

On this Monday morning, however, her horse was brought to the door by Mark, and Vera was preparing to mount, when her step-mother appeared on the scene.

"Why, Vera! is your father going to ride with you?" she asked, knowing perfectly well he was not.

"Oh, no; I always ride alone," said Vera.

"But you can't do so now; Mark must go with you. Mark, saddle the brown cob, and remember for the future Miss Vera will always want you to accompany her."

"Excuse me, but nothing would induce me to ride out with Mark behind me. If he goes I shall remain at home," said Vera, stroking her horse's nose, as Mark disappeared to obey his new mistress's instructions.

"You can please yourself about that. I will not allow you to go scampering about the country without an escort, like some farmer's wife," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest angrily.

Vera was angry, too, as her flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes told ; but she had no intention of yielding, for Norah had warned her on no account to ride out with Mark if her father kept him after hearing of his cruel conduct to Reuben Foreman.

"I shall appeal to my father," said Vera, fastening her horse to a nail in the porch ; and then gathering up her habit she ran lightly into the house to Mr. Ryot-Tempest's study.

The Rector was sitting by his writing-table with his Peerage open in front of him, on his right hand lay his Lemprière, on the left his Bible. He looked up as Vera entered, and listened impatiently to her just but animated statement of her case.

"Why do you object to ride with Mark if your—your—if your step-mother wishes it?" stammered Mr. Ryot-Tempest.

"Because I hate him, and I won't allow him to accompany me. He is a wicked man, papa, and I wish you would get rid of him. Norah says he is mad with jealousy and anger since Janet married. He nearly killed poor Reuben by his wickedness. That relapse was all Mark's fault."

"Nonsense, my dear ; nonsense : that is an exaggeration of Norah's."

"No, papa, it is not. You never will believe anything against Mark. But will you decide what is to be done, please ? Am I to be deprived of my favourite recreation to please Mrs. Tempest ?"

"My dear Vera, 'Mrs. Tempest' is so very formal," interrupted the Rector.

"What am I to call her, then ? I can't say Poppy," said Vera.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest did not know what to reply to this question, so he wisely said nothing. He had considered the matter in the night-watches, but no other mode of address had suggested itself.

"I have always ridden alone," continued Vera, "and if I give up riding, my headaches are sure to come on."

Mr. Ryot-Tempest put his hand to his own head and looked so careworn and distressed that Vera regretted having appealed to him, and resolved in future to fight her own battles.

"I will ride with you to-day, and we will see what arrangements can be made in future," he said at last ; and Vera, knowing her step-mother's influence was too strong for him to resist, felt sure that her rides would be stopped. For strange to say, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had taken a violent fancy to Mark Brown, and would be sure to insist on his accompanying her. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was really very angry when her husband came out and dismissing Mark and the cob sent for his own pony, but she was much too clever to show it. She smiled her sweetest smile as she kissed her husband, and said in a reproving tone :

"I fear you spoil this naughty girl, Ryot." And Vera knew the riding question was already settled.

"We will discuss the matter when I come back," said the Rector nervously, as he followed Vera down the drive.

It was a warm day, so her father's pace suited Vera, and she gave herself up to enjoyment of the present and forgot all her troubles : as she generally did when in the saddle. On their return they rode past the forge, and Vera suggested they should see if Reuben had gone back to his work.

He had ; and he came out to speak to them ; but he was so altered that Vera, who had not seen him since the night he saved her life, was shocked. He looked ten years older ; his hair was blanched and his face was thin and worn. But more striking than either his grey hair or thin face was his bent figure. Not that the stoop was remarkable ; on the contrary the stalwart frame was only slightly bent ; but it gave one the impression that the giant was carrying a burden which even his broad shoulders found too heavy.

"I am glad to see you at work again, Reuben," said the Rector.

"I don't think I am, Reuben," said Vera, with one of her bright smiles. "I believe you ought to be resting."

"This is the first time I have been to the forge, sir, and it is wonderful how weak I feel ; a few strokes of my hammer are all I can manage at a time," said Reuben, raising his cap as he would not have done before his illness.

"Patience, Reuben, patience ; you'll gain strength every day now, I hope," said the Rector.

"I am not complaining, sir ; the Lord has been very merciful to me ; far more so than I deserved," said Reuben humbly. And there was such sincerity in his voice and manner, that much as Mr. Ryot-Tempest disliked this style of conversation in one who was not a member of his own flock, he could not doubt that the blacksmith really meant what he said.

"By the way, Reuben, what is this that I hear about Mark Brown being the cause of your relapse ?" asked Mr. Ryot-Tempest, who was feeling very nervous and uncomfortable at the thought that his son had married Reuben's daughter.

"Mark, sir, only told me the truth before I was strong enough to bear it. I don't blame Mark," said Reuben.

"There, Vera ; I told you it was Norah's exaggeration. She has a prejudice against Mark," said the Rector triumphantly.

"Perhaps it wasn't the truth that he told," said Vera.

Reuben started, and looked at Vera with intense longing in his eyes for a moment ; and then the look of settled melancholy returned, and it seemed to Vera he stooped more than ever.

"It was the truth, Miss Vera," he said sorrowfully.

"Reuben, you are not well enough to work. I shall come and see you at home soon ; you want cheering up ; you should make Norah

come back to Woodford," said Vera, as she gathered up her bridlereins and prepared to ride on.

Mr. Tempest inwardly hoped providence would prevent this from taking place as he followed his daughter up the steep pitch to the Rectory ; for the return of Mrs. Canter to the village would not tend to lessen his domestic troubles.

These threatened to become serious, for on his return he found if he wished for peace he must not interfere between his wife and Vera again, unless it were to take the former's part ; for after trying scolding, sulking, caressing, weeping, arguing and flattering in succession, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest finally succeeded in making him tell Vera she must either yield to her step-mother's wish and ride with Mark or remain at home.

Vera elected to do the latter, and as her drives had the same restriction imposed upon them, and it was too hot to walk far, she rarely got out beyond the garden. This was just about the time Captain Raleigh was to sail for India ; and this, and the changes in her home-life weighed on the girl, and she grew ill and depressed before she had been home a month. Her headaches returned, and Mr. Ryot-Tempest, without consulting his wife, sent for the doctor one Saturday afternoon.

The doctor prescribed a tonic and horse-exercise, and if these failed, change of air ; and poor Mr. Ryot-Tempest spent the time he should have devoted to preparing his sermon to considering how the problem of Vera's riding was to be solved, since he knew very well that neither she nor his Poppy would yield in the matter. The problem was still unsolved on Sunday morning when he went into the vestry to robe for the morning-service.

He put on his cassock, and then he meekly donned the short surplice, though it was almost as distasteful to him as a convict's dress would have been ; and then he looked round for the old black stole he always wore, but this was nowhere to be seen. In its place, however, was a red one, with gold fringe at each end ; and positively crosses embroidered on it.

Mr. Ryot-Tempest looked at this rag of popery, this ribbon from the wardrobe of the Scarlet Woman, as he inwardly called the offending stole, and great drops of perspiration stood on his brow as he looked ; then he wiped his face ; then he took up the stole very gingerly, apparently fearing it might burn his fingers. And then after a moment's hesitation he appeared to come to some decision, and opening a drawer, he thrust the stole in and locked it up.

"I must draw the line at this. Poppy is an enthusiast, and like all enthusiasts, she goes to extremes. I was weak about the surplices, very weak, but I shall be firm about this," he said to himself, as the despairing organist began the voluntary for the third time.

Then he instituted another search for his black favourite ; but

failing to find it and suddenly awaking to the fact that it was five minutes past eleven, he went into the church without a stole.

There is a point at which the very worm will turn ; so the proverb assures us ; and Mr. Ryot-Tempest had now reached the point where he felt rebellion against his wife's rule must begin. He had meekly submitted to all the household changes she made, and they were many, without a murmur. He had allowed her to make Vera ill for a mere whim, for she refused to allow the coachman to ride behind her instead of Mark. He had agreed to turn out early every morning to conduct a service she never attended ; he had worn a cassock and an indecently short surplice to please her ; he had winked at some flower-vases which she had placed on the Communion-table ; or rather he religiously turned his back on it so as not to see them ; but to wear a coloured stole was too much to ask him ; there he drew the line.

"I have been weak ; I have let her get in the thin end of the wedge ; a short surplice is merely a caprice of fashion, but a coloured stole involves a principle. I must be true to my principles ; I must stick to my colours, and my colour is black. But I fear I shall have rather a mauvais quart d'heure when I return," thought the Rector as he read the prayers.

After the service was over the clerk came to help him to unrobe. By the way, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest called this functionary "the sacristan," and would have put him into a cassock ; but he had a stronger will than his master, and had refused point blank to wear one.

"Simmons, see that my black stole is here this evening," said the Rector in his most decided tone, as Simmons took off his surplice.

"Certainly, sir ; but Mrs. Tempest has taken it."

"I don't ask where it is, all I desire is it shall be here this evening," interrupted the Rector. And when the evening came the stole was there, and its owner took care not to inquire how it was obtained.

On his return home, signs of a brewing storm were evident. Not one word did his wife speak to him the whole of that day. To Vera, who wondered what the casus belli was, she was unusually sweet and talkative ; but not so much as a look did she vouchsafe her husband, but ignored his presence completely, till he felt himself effaced. She remained at home in the evening, and at dinner she was as silent as at luncheon ; all day the clouds were gathering ; but it was not till Mr. Ryot-Tempest, after dawdling in his dressing-room as long as he dared, at length ventured into his bedroom that the storm broke.

There in an easy-chair, with her hair down her back like a tragedy-queen, robed in a very grand dressing-gown, sat Mrs. Ryot-Tempest ; and if her husband hoped to be allowed to get into bed just yet he was doomed to disappointment.

"May I ask the meaning of your conduct to-day, Mr. Tempest?" she demanded haughtily.

"To what do you allude, my dear?" feebly answered the poor little man, shuffling across the room in his dressing-gown and slippers.

"To your scornful rejection of my poor little offering towards the fabric of the Church. The set of stoles I have presented are not perhaps the handsomest which can be obtained, but they are at least decent, which is more than can be said for that black rag Simmons has been so insolent to Holmes about."

"My dear, they are beautiful, very beautiful. It is the principle, not the stoles, that I object to. My conscience will not allow me to wear them, deeply as I appreciate your generosity in giving them."

"You appear to appreciate it, certainly. But I, too, have a conscience, and my conscience will not allow me to attend a church where the services are not done decently and in order; so for the future I shall drive to Ashchurch."

"The services not done decently, my dear! I have always been most careful to adhere strictly to the rubrics and to the principles of the Church of which I have the honour to be a minister; and I sincerely hope you will not dream of driving elsewhere."

"I shall not dream about it. I shall do it, unless my wishes are consulted, and my deepest feelings regarded."

"Dear me, dear me, what is to be done? Poppy, darling, do be reasonable. I can't act against my conscience even to please you. This, you see, involved a principle," said the poor little Rector, walking up and down the room in perplexity, knowing that to ask a woman to be reasonable was as futile as to ask a lawyer to be honest.

"Pray be seated; my nerves are sufficiently shattered by all I have suffered to-day from you and Vera. She tells me the doctor has ordered her horse exercise, and yet she refuses to take it. I really fear I am on the eve of an illness; I am not strong enough to cope with such strong wills." And here Mrs. Ryot-Tempest resorted to the melting mood, and began to sob hysterically, and poor Mr. Ryot-Tempest felt, as he was meant to feel, that he was a brute.

"Don't, Poppy, dear, don't; I really must be firm about this; ask anything else of me and I will do my best to grant it," he exclaimed distractedly as he knelt by her side and began to chafe one of her hands in his. The sobs gradually but quickly subsided; she did not wish for swelled eyelids, especially now she had gained the point she was really aiming at. Not the red stole—that was only one of the outworks; one of several, but only an outwork—her aim was the city, which was all but won, and soon her standard would fly from the citadel.

"Then if you mean what you say, I should like to have Mr. Hastings for your curate. I will pay him."

"A curate! My dearest Poppy, you have taken me by storm. I must consider the matter. A curate—well, yes, I don't know that there is any objection to a curate—there is plenty to do; but Mr. Hastings—I fear his views would preclude his entering into any engagement with me; they are so very extreme."

"Leave that to me. I'll take care he is prudent. He will be so very useful; he is a gentleman by birth and very well off. He can ride with Vera, and take the early services, and wear those pretty stoles you object to so much, you dear old-fashioned thing," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who, having obtained what she had been desiring for some time, was now all smiles and amiability.

"He must clearly understand that I can't allow any high sacramental teaching; in fact, no doctrinal teaching at all. It is so much safer to avoid dogma."

"My dear, don't let him preach at all, that will be the best way," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, knowing that Mr. Hastings could never be trusted to avoid airing his opinions if once he were in the pulpit. And those opinions would have made his future Rector's hair stand on end; for even his patroness privately considered he went too far, as she expressed it: though how it is possible to go too far in the right direction—and she considered Mr. Hastings on the road to truth—she did not stop to inquire.

Mr. Hastings was the curate Vera had met at dinner at Mrs. Jamieson's, whose views on the celibacy of the clergy were modified by her charms, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had a twofold object in getting him to Woodford. First and foremost she had decided he should marry Vera; secondly, he could do all Mr. Ryot-Tempest objected to doing in the church and parish.

"Vera," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest the next morning, "I have such a piece of news for you. You remember that Mr. Hastings you met at my house; he is coming here almost immediately as your father's curate. So you will be able to ride out as often as you like, for I am sure he will be only too glad to escort you. And we shall be able to have such nice services. He will wear all those pretty stoles I showed you, and use the eastward position—your father must let him do that—and work the parish up. Haven't I done well?"

"Yes, if only he gets on with papa. I don't care a scrap what he wears or where he stands in church—on his head if he likes; but I shall be delighted to have someone to ride with me."

"I believe, Vera, you are even more Protestant than your father. How could you ever have thought of marrying a Romanist with your views?"

"I shall never marry anyone else; but I really can't see what coloured stoles and short surplices and all such man-millinery have to do with it. They don't seem to me to touch the real question at all. I can't take any interest in such things.—But look at my father! He looks as if he had seen a ghost," said Vera, rising from

the breakfast-table and going to the window to see what had alarmed her father.

There on the lawn stood Mr. Ryot-Tempest gazing down the drive, apparently too terrified to move. And there advancing towards him was Mrs. Canter in her weeds, wiping her face with one hand, for it was a very hot August morning, and with the other leading a large and beautiful mastiff. Mrs. Canter alone would have struck terror into the Rector's mind ; and he would have fled to his study had she been unaccompanied ; but Mrs. Canter accompanied by a huge mastiff simply paralysed him, for he had a horror of dogs. He was therefore considerably relieved when Vera came flying past him to rush into Norah's arms, and his wife ran her arm through his and led him towards the house.

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. CANTER'S SYSTEM OF THOUGHT.

To explain the appearance of Mrs. Canter and the mastiff described in the last chapter we must go back a few weeks in our chronicle.

It was ironing-day ; that is to say it was the fifth day in the week ; the majority of people call it Thursday ; Mrs. Canter did not, but then we know her opinion of the majority of her countrymen. She was engaged in the work to which ironing-day was consecrated. It was pleasanter work in winter than on a hot day in August, but then Mrs. Canter had a soul above such physical conditions as heat and cold where her art was concerned ; so she was pursuing the ironing branch of her profession this scorching August Thursday with profound equanimity.

If her cheeks burnt and the perspiration stood on her forehead, these were purely weaknesses of the flesh over which she had no control. The main point is that her mind was calm and collected, her judgment cool and philosophical.

For Mrs. Canter was a philosopher in her way. That way was narrow, and her system of thought was certainly restricted ; but then it was original, and an original thinker deserves attention. Modern philosophers look with scorn on the geocentric theory, but the most ardent advocates of that theory would have looked with scorn on Mrs. Canter's system of thought had she lived in Ptolemaic times. That system can only be described by coining a word : *tubcentric* would accurately describe her school ; a school with at present very few disciples, for not the earth, let alone the sun, but her washing-tub, was the centre of her philosophy. Mrs. Canter, however, was no proselytiser. The heliocentric school could follow their very broad way, which leads to destruction ; the geocentric school could follow their narrower path ; Mrs. Canter would follow hers : if she made no converts, the rest of the world were the losers. Her tub remained

the centre of her universe, the centre round which all her ideas revolved.

Suddenly a shadow darkened the open door, and, looking up from her delicate task of guffering the frill of a shirt-front, Mrs. Canter saw a gentleman, whom she at once guessed to be Captain Raleigh, standing on the threshold.

"Mrs. Canter, I believe?" he said, raising his hat.

"Yes, sir; I don't want to ask who you are; it is Miss Vera's Captain, I am sure. Come in and welcome."

"Thank you; but isn't it rather warm?" said Captain Raleigh, entering the kitchen, with a glance at the large clear fire Norah kept for the sake of her irons.

"I suppose it is; but if you don't mind coming into the laundry, it is cool enough there; there is no linen about either. I'll bring in an easy-chair and get you some tea. You look tired, sir," said Mrs. Canter, leading the way to the laundry, where Captain Raleigh was soon made at home.

"What a delightfully cool place! It is a perfect paradise after the heat I have endured travelling to-day; but I wanted to make your acquaintance before I leave England, Mrs. Canter."

Mrs. Canter was too busy preparing tea for her guest to enter into conversation until he was sipping his tea out of her best china service, and renewing his inner man with some delicious home-made bread and country butter; and then he explained the object of his visit.

"The fact is, Mrs. Canter, I want to find a home for my dog whilst I am away. He is a mastiff, and my mother is rather afraid of him, though he is really as gentle as a lamb. I thought perhaps you might be good enough to undertake the care of him; we shall not quarrel about terms. I should like you to write to me once a fortnight and tell me how he is. And if you had any other news; if you happened to know how Miss Vera was; you—you might just mention it. But I don't wish her to know I have been to see you. Do you see?"

"I understand, sir. You wish me to let you know every fortnight how Miss Vera is; and if I were to forget to mention the dog every time, I take it you'll forgive me?" said Mrs. Canter.

"I take it you are a clever woman, Mrs. Canter," replied Captain Raleigh, smiling.

"The Lord forbid, sir, for I am not a fool; and in my opinion there is no fool like a clever woman. I wash for one, sir. They tell me she has passed every examination a woman can pass, and the nonsense that good lady does talk about washing would surprise you, sir. My Mary Jane knows more about it than she does, with all her learning. What, as I say, is the use of book-learning if you can't even wash a shirt decently? Books won't teach you that. Folks must be clean; they ar'n't forced to be clever. People are all a deal too clever

nowadays ; they know too much, or think they do, at any rate. The tree of knowledge don't grow any better fruit now than it did in the Garden of Eden. Knowledge won't teach people to keep their clothes clean, nor their bodies and souls neither."

"You think not, Mrs. Canter?"

"I am sure of it, sir ; people know everything nowadays and believe nothing, and the world grows wickeder every day. Seems to me, people worship nothing ; but they all have a different name for it."

"I am afraid the tendency nowadays is to worship poor sinful humanity, instead of God," said Captain Raleigh.

"Worship humanity, sir ! You might as well worship my mangle ; better ; for that does good, and the generality of human beings do evil. I have no faith in humanity."

"You don't believe in positivism then, Mrs. Canter?"

"I don't know what that is, sir, unless it is being positive you are right when you are wrong ; if so, there are plenty of Positivists in the world ; but I know I would just as soon believe in my tom-cat as in the things some of these clever people believe in, if half our parson says of them is true. Talking of him reminds me of Mr. Tempest. He has caught a Tartar this time, or I am mistaken ; I give him five years, sir, and if he isn't lying in his grave by then, my name won't be Norah Canter."

"Perhaps it won't be, Mrs. Canter?"

"Trust me, sir. I hate second-hand things, and if I was a man, I'd rather never put on clean clothes than marry a second-hand wife ; and that's what I call a widow who marries again. They may be cheap, but they are seldom good for much. I suppose that is why men are so fond of widows, for they never know what is good for them, saving your presence. But I will say this : if ever a man chose wisely you did when you chose my young lady, bless her."

And then Mrs. Canter regaled her visitor with anecdotes of Vera's childhood and youth, which so interested him that he very nearly missed his train, and had only time to make a few hurried arrangements about the mastiff, the ostensible object of his visit. A few days later he sailed for India, and the mastiff arrived at Marling ; where it remained until Mrs. Canter heard that Vera was not well, and not likely to be so long as her riding was forbidden. And then the idea occurred to her that the mastiff would be a great protection to Vera in her rides. She no sooner conceived this idea than she hastened to put it into execution. Hence her arrival that Monday morning. She was very careful that no one should suspect where the mastiff came from, and her account of his antecedents furnished the recording angel with matter to report, though Mrs. Canter trusted he would add an extenuating clause in her favour. She had not much difficulty in inducing Mr. Tempest to let Vera keep the dog, since she said she would have no objection to ride with Mark if Lion went

with her ; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was in favour of keeping a dog as a protection against burglars. So the matter was easily settled.

"Mind you always feed him yourself, Miss Vera," said Norah significantly, when she took her leave that afternoon ; and Vera promised to do so.

That evening Vera went to see Reuben, a visit she had intended making every day since she had called at the forge, but had never been able to accomplish. Now she had a delicate task to perform, for Mrs. Canter had left Janet's letter with her to deliver when she saw a suitable opportunity, wisely thinking Vera had more tact in such matters than she herself possessed.

Reuben was in his garden when Vera arrived, sitting on a bench smoking a pipe, and looking very sad and lonely. The garden had been neglected during his illness, and he had not done much to it since his recovery. The grass-grown path, and the flourishing crops of coltsfoot and bindweed, rag-wort and fumitory, which choked up his vegetables, his flowering rhubarb, and his roses, which had reverted to type and bore suckers of brambles and large-eyed roses, did not form a cheerful background to the slightly bent figure of the giant blacksmith, who rose to his feet and laid aside his pipe when Vera appeared.

She was dressed in white, with a large black hat, and black ribbons on her dress, and a bunch of scarlet geraniums, the first scrap of colour she had worn since her mother's death, at her bosom. Norah had fastened them on, declaring her pale cheeks could not stand the white dress unrelieved by any colour. The result was that Vera, though looking delicate, had seldom looked more beautiful. Her golden hair seemed fairer than it was by contrast with the black hat, and her great dark eyes had a melancholy longing look in them which added to their beauty.

"But for me she would have been in her grave," thought Reuben, as he greeted her.

The sight of Vera brought back that night when he had saved her life, and, as he believed, stained his soul with the blackest of sins, most vividly to him ; and if his first thought was gratitude at having been allowed to save the beautiful girl now standing before him, his next was remorse and sorrow for his unpardonable sin ; for unpardonable he considered it was. Ever since Mark Brown had told him Janet's baby was buried, Reuben had believed himself to be its murderer. Over and over again had he been on the point of giving himself up to justice. Over and over again had he dreamt that he was arrested on a charge of infanticide. Hour after hour had he laid awake wondering how it was no one ever mentioned Janet or her baby to him. Sometimes he wondered how it was no one shrank from him except Mark Brown. Did no one suspect he was guilty of this awful sin ?

Was Janet screening him ? Had she found the child herself, and

to screen him, invented some excuse for its death? If so, no wonder she had left England without leaving one word of explanation or farewell.

Over and over again had he been round the churchyard to see if he could find the baby's grave; but no baby had been buried there since his illness. No doubt Janet had taken the little corpse to Marling, and buried it there, was the conclusion he arrived at finally.

Day and night his sin haunted him, his conscience tormented him; remorse and fear by night, sorrow and shame by day, were his constant companions. Lonely as his home was, he was never alone—one of these avenging spirits was always with him, till more than once he had sprung up from his bed or his bench, and vowed to give himself up; death on the gallows would be better than this mental agony. Each time he had repented of this resolve—at night because it was impossible till daylight came, and when it came his mood had changed. In the daytime his furnace prevented him; it presented too vivid a picture of the place unrepentant murderers go to for him to hasten his own journey thither.

He was not unrepentant; on the contrary he was deeply penitent, but he was in a morbid mood. He doubted the mercy of God, he put limits to the illimitable, to the infinite. He put his own private interpretation of Scripture on certain texts, with no happier result than that of others who do likewise. He considered himself one of those who, having fallen away, it is impossible to renew them. He was a dead branch; outwardly still a member, but a diseased and mortifying member who must one day, sooner or later, be cut off from the brethren.

No wonder the blacksmith stooped while he carried such a burden as this. No wonder he took so little interest in his garden, when he felt his time would be so short. For it seemed to him a toss-up whether he was arrested or whether he gave himself up, and a question that a few weeks at longest must decide.

"Well, Reuben, here I am at last. I am ashamed of myself, but I have not been well or happy lately. However, Norah has given me a scolding to-day, and it has done me good. And she has given me this lovely dog, too—isn't he a beauty. I don't mean him to be chained up, so if ever I walk out in my sleep again, he'll follow me. Sleeping or waking, I mean Lion to be my constant companion. 'Love me, love my dog,' will be my motto for the future."

"He's a splendid fellow, Miss Vera. Where did Norah get him from?"

"She says he was given to her by a gentleman, but I am very much afraid she bought him. You are not looking well, Reuben. Have you heard from Janet yet?"

"No, Miss Vera, no; I shall never hear from Janet again. I don't deserve to either," said Reuben sorrowfully.

"What do you mean, Reuben, by not deserving a letter from your

daughter? A better father never lived than you have been to Janet. I can't think how she could have deceived you as she did; so I have told both her and my brother," said Vera severely.

"Miss Vera, there is not a greater sinner living than I am. If you knew how deeply I have sinned you would never speak to me again, though I saved your life," said Reuben, trying to make up his mind to tell Vera of the burden which lay so heavily on his conscience.

"Do you know, Reuben, I don't think you ought to brood over your sins like this. We are all wicked, but I can't see that thinking of nothing but our wickedness will make us good. If I were you, I should tidy up this wilderness of a garden a little. I am sure that would be a much healthier occupation than thinking so much about your sins."

"It is a wilderness, indeed, but I have not had the heart to do a stroke in it. Miss Vera, do you happen to know where—where Janet—where Janet's baby is buried?" said Reuben, his voice trembling with agitation.

"I don't know where exactly, but in Liverpool somewhere," said Vera.

"In Liverpool!" exclaimed Reuben.

"Why, yes; it died there, you know, on the day Janet was to have sailed. I believe they had a stupid doctor, for the baby was quite well when Janet left Ashchurch on my father's wedding-day. She was not fit to travel herself, though, and Norah says if she had only rested a few days the baby would have been alive now. She declares it was all my step-mother's fault for bustling Janet off when she was only fit to be in bed. But, Reuben, don't, please don't! I am sure you are very ill," said Vera, interrupting herself as Reuben sank on to the garden seat, and buried his face in his hands.

The relief at finding his own conduct was not the immediate cause of the child's death was so great that the blacksmith, weakened by illness, could not bear it, and tears of joy and thankfulness ran down his cheeks. The mastiff was at a loss to understand the scene, and poked his nose against Reuben's great sinewy hands to inquire into the matter and express his sympathy. He did so to Vera's great relief, for she was at a loss to know what to do; and the dog solved the problem: as animals sometimes do when human beings are at fault. Reuben recovered himself presently, and played with Lion to cover his emotion until he was able to speak; and Vera, seeing the tears had done him no harm, thought it would be a propitious moment to give him Janet's letter.

It was an affectionate letter, begging Reuben to forgive her for deceiving him as she had done, and explaining why Rex had insisted on her silence. The letter then said where Janet had found the baby, and how she guessed her father, in his delirium, had taken the child. It concluded with an account of its illness and death, which the writer supposed was a judgment on her for her clandestine marriage.

As Reuben read, the burden seemed to fall from his shoulders. He was innocent of that awful crime. No one, not even Janet, who knew he had stolen the baby from her, suspected him of any sin in the matter. What sin there was was a secret sin, and no fear of being arrested for infanticide, nor any more thoughts of giving himself up to justice need distress him. As he put the letter in his pocket and came towards Vera, he walked erect again and looked, if not himself, a happier man than he had done since his illness.

"Thank you, Miss Vera. I'll write to Janet next mail, and if you'll come and see me in a few days, you won't know my garden."

"That's right, Reuben. You see my scolding has done you good; you look better already."

"Yes, Miss Vera; you and Janet's letter between you have cured me, I hope."

"I hope so, too; so mind you don't have any more relapses," said Vera, as she and Lion took their leave.

A week later and Reuben's crop of weeds had entirely disappeared. His garden was as neat as could be desired, and except that he was thinner and graver than before his illness, the village blacksmith was to outward appearance himself again.

Inwardly he was changed. A man does not pass through a temptation such as Reuben had experienced unchanged. Such a crisis in the history of a man's soul sets its mark for good or for evil, for eternity on him, according to whether the temptation be yielded to or resisted: for temptation has more to do with the moulding of character than either joy or sorrow. It was so in the Garden of Eden; it is so in these latter days. The joys of Paradise left no permanent mark on the souls of our first parents; their sorrows died with them; but the temptation branded not only their souls, but the souls of all the human race. Verily the consequences of sin are eternal. Vain to speculate on what would have happened had Adam declined the apple. The best way to discover is to resist temptation, decline the apple, though the proffering Eve be passing fair; decline it, and then we shall know; and the knowledge of good surpasses the knowledge of evil as light transcends darkness.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. RYOT-TEMPEST AND HIS CURATE ARE LEFT IN THE LURCH.

THE winter passed as English winters usually pass, slowly enough for the generality of people. A trinity of fog, snow and east-wind governed the elements and had it all their own way. At first fog was in the ascendant, and the metropolis was wrapped in a shroud of thick darkness, and the country in a veil of darkness made visible. Later on snow took the reins, and a white world was the result. Then

fog and snow resigned their share in the government in favour of the east-wind, which had a long reign and a royal time, cutting the strong and healthy with its stinging blasts, nipping the frail and fragile in the bud, and killing off the old and delicate whom the fog and snow had spared.

Mrs. Canter, we know, was one of those happy people who have a soul above the influences of climate. So she pursued her calling, callous as to such sublunary considerations as fog and snow, east-wind and sleet, and the winter left her much as it found her. Nor had it any great visible effect on the Woodford people. There seemed to have come a lull in their lives after the excitement of their Rector's second marriage, but if so, it was the calm before a storm. Moreover, seasons of outward calm are sometimes forcing-beds for the development of character, and the long winter did not leave the inhabitants of the Rectory as unchanged as Mrs. Canter.

Nor was Reuben quite the same. His illness had made him a sadder and perhaps a wiser man, and though, since Vera gave him Janet's letter, he no longer considered himself the cause of his grand-child's death, he had fits of repentance, in which he blamed himself bitterly for yielding as much as he had done to the fierce temptation of that terrible night. But these fits were secret, for there was a great deal of spiritual pride in the blacksmith, and though he wrote frequently to Janet, he never once alluded to her baby, or his own conduct. Janet on her side was a regular correspondent, and Reuben gathered from her letters that she was exceedingly happy with her Rex, who was devoting much of his time to her education. Mark Brown studiously avoided the blacksmith; he had not spoken to him since his dipping by Mrs. Canter; indeed, this summary treatment of hers was far from having the salutary effect she had anticipated. Plausible as ever to his master, he was cringing to Mrs. Ryot-Tempest. To the servants he grew daily more ill-tempered and surly, while with all his cunning he could not conceal entirely his increasing hatred of Vera, to whose influence he most unjustly attributed Mrs. Canter's chastisement of him, as well as the loss of Janet; and he was only waiting an opportunity of revenging himself. That opportunity must come in time, and he could be patient.

Meanwhile, the unconscious object of his aversion had thought the winter would never end, so interminable had seemed the long months to her, who was counting the days to her twenty-first birthday. If she could but have had a letter from Captain Raleigh now and again the time would have passed quicker, and the strain on her health would have been less severe. But the long weary months rolled slowly by without a sign from him, and but for her rides she would have broken down, for her home life was very different now.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest scarcely took the trouble to conceal her growing dislike of her step-daughter; so Vera was much alone, for she

saw her father's only chance of happiness was to ignore her and pay his wife all the attention she expected. And for his sake Vera was content to be ignored, and lived alone more than was good for her.

The bright spot in her life was her frequent rides with Mr. Hastings, the new curate. Three or four times a week they rode together, accompanied by Lion; and never once did it occur to Vera that the curate, whom she teased mercilessly about his Ritualism, affecting to hold ultra-Protestant views herself, never did it occur to her that he regarded her as more than a friend.

As for Mr. Hastings, the winter had flown for him. Those rides were the delight of his life. He thought of them by day and dreamt of them by night. Every time they started for a ride he made up his mind to declare his love before they returned; every day they returned without his having done so.

He was desperately in love. It had been with him as with most men, love at first sight. He loved Vera the first time he met her at dinner at Mrs. Jamieson's, and his love grew stronger and deeper every day; and the various battles he had fought with his conscience on account of this love only strengthened it.

When he first met Vera, he thought it wrong for priests to marry. And as he was nothing in his own eyes if not a priest, the only conclusion to be drawn from these premises was that it was wrong for him to marry. But now he had succeeded in persuading himself that celibacy was only a counsel of perfection given to those who could accept it. And with many sighs and groans he confessed that he could not; that is, if Vera would accept him. Had he been left to himself he would hardly have dared to think this possible, for he had a very humble opinion of his own personal worth, in spite of his exalted ideas of his office. But Mrs. Ryot-Tempest took care to buoy him up with hope, and to assure him Vera was much too honourable to ride with him so often unless she meant to accept him.

"I don't believe she thinks any more of me than she does of Lion or Firefly," he would reply. But in spite of himself, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's subtle flattery did its work, and the poor young man was only too eager and glad to believe her. Nevertheless, he had not the courage to learn his fate.

When Lent came he resolved to mortify his flesh by declining to ride, but Vera would not hear of this; and as her slightest wish was more to him than canon law, he yielded, and found some other way of reducing his not too solid flesh. What that way was, probably only members of Mr. Hastings' party could exactly tell; but if hollow cheeks and a sallow complexion were the ends desired, the way was eminently successful.

Towards the end of Lent, the long expected Archdeaconry was offered to Mr. Ryot-Tempest, and, needless to say, was at once accepted. Had he wished, he would not have dared to refuse it, for

he had discovered the grey mare was the better horse, and though he had drawn the line at coloured stoles, he had had to submit in domestic matters to all his new wife's caprices. In church matters Mr. Hastings relieved him of much difficulty, for the curate dressed his long body in short surplices and coloured stoles, and faced the east, and bowed and scraped and twisted and turned his same long body about as the rectoress desired, and was in reality so devout that his Rector respected the man, though he constantly told him his place was not in the Church of England.

But though Mr. Hastings smoothed that part of Mr. Ryot-Tempest's path of life which lay through the Church, there were many stones on the path which ran through his home-life, and these the Rector had to stumble over alone as best he could; and if he went slowly and sadly at times, he had but himself to blame for choosing the path. Somehow the Peerage and Lemprière were less studied now than formerly, and the third Book which lay on his study table was read oftener than it used to be. Is it possible that that Book was a better guide through his stony path than Debrett or Lemprière?

Simultaneously with the news that the Rector was made Archdeacon, a report of burglars in the neighbourhood reached Woodford, to the consternation of most of the inhabitants; particularly of the Archdeacon-elect.

"My dear Poppy, I really think it would be as well to send your diamonds to the bank; we are not going out much just now. I think it would be safer," remarked Mr. Ryot-Tempest one day at luncheon, just before Easter.

"Nonsense; I shall do nothing of the kind. Burglars never come unless they are in league with the servants, and our servants are honest. Besides, I have accepted several invitations for next week: Lent is just over, thank goodness," replied Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

Her husband sighed: perhaps he thought his life would be all Lent henceforth. There was certainly no need for him to eat Lenten fare, or wear a hair shirt. His flesh could be subdued by other means; and was, as he found to his cost.

"By the way, Ryot, will you remind your tailor to send your new dress-clothes for next Tuesday; we are going to a large party at Lord William's."

"Certainly, my dear, certainly. And since you wish your diamonds to remain here, I think I had better buy a revolver. We have no firearms in the house, and the account of these burglars behoves us to take precautions."

"You can do as you like about that. A more useless weapon for you I don't know. Who is to fire it, may I ask?"

"I will," said Vera. "Do get one, papa. Burglars are such cowards; a little powder would frighten them."

"We'll drive in to Chiefton this afternoon, then. And, Vera, will you be kind enough to go and visit a sick woman for me with Mr.

Hastings? Holmes will tell you what to take her, and Mr. Hastings will be here at three," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

Vera complied, never thinking this charitable mission was a trap to throw her with Mr. Hastings; and when he arrived he was agreeably surprised to find she was to accompany him instead of her step-mother. He looked so ghastly, however, that Vera refused to stir until he had had a glass of wine and some biscuits. After vainly protesting, he yielded, and ate and drank, while Vera scolded him for looking so ill. Whether the wine got into his head or not will never be known. As he had taken little or no food that day probably it did so; but when they got into the fresh air the curate found himself in such an elated state, that on reaching the gate at the bottom of the drive he turned suddenly to Vera, and instead of opening it he seized her hands, and, to her utter amazement, exclaimed:

"Vera, I can't go another step till I know your answer. I love you. God only knows how I love you. Is there any hope for me?"

Something told him there was none before Vera spoke, and at first she could find no words to answer him. Her first impulse was to laugh and say "priests" did not marry; but a glance at that pale, haggard face bent down so imploringly to hers forbade her to joke. Gently she disengaged one of her hands, and with the other she led him back towards a seat close by in the shrubbery.

"Come and sit down here for a minute, please."

He obeyed, and they sat down hand in hand.

"I am so sorry; so dreadfully sorry; but I thought you knew about me," began Vera.

"Knew what? Oh! not that you care for anyone else?" he asked, suspecting from her words and manner it must be so.

"Yes, and that in about a month he will come and take me away from my not too happy home," said Vera gently.

The curate withdrew his clasp from Vera's and buried his poor, thin face in his long bony hands. How long they sat there Vera never knew; it seemed ages to her. Not a sound escaped from him; but now and then a little sob from her disturbed that silence otherwise unbroken, save for the happy birds singing above them.

Happy birds! They know nothing of broken hearts and unrequited love, rejected addresses, and the thousand-and-one other ills human flesh is heir to. Thrice happy birds! Sing on, though your song be the death knell of the earthly happiness of one unhappy man.

Presently Mr. Hastings rose to his feet, and Vera, dashing some tears from her beautiful eyes, rose too. Once more he took one of her hands in both his and she knew he had abandoned all hope. He would never make love to her again; nor, she suspected, would he ever make love to any other woman.

"Tell me a little more, please," he said gently.

Vera told him in as few words as possible about Captain Raleigh, and why their engagement was forbidden.

"Thank you," he said, when she finished. "God bless you and him. And when you see him tell him this:" and as he spoke, he drew Vera to him and kissed her forehead. The next minute he was gone, and Vera ran home and shut herself in her room, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's sick woman had no visitors that day.

This was on the Monday before Easter; and the next day—for Vera always rode on a Tuesday—Mark brought her mare and Lion round as usual. She knew Mr. Hastings would not ride with her; but not caring to bring on the explanation his absence would cause, she said nothing to anyone, but started alone. This was her usual custom to save him from riding up the steep hill to the Rectory, so it occasioned no remark. As she had anticipated, there was no sign of Mr. Hastings when she reached their trysting place; and with a sigh, in which regret and relief were mingled, she rode off alone, Lion barking joyously around her in a series of triumphant barks, as though challenging poor suffering humanity to rival his happiness in the provoking way dogs have when their spirits are higher than their masters'. They passed the curate's house, but there was no sign of him to be seen, for the simple reason that by this time he was miles away from Woodford.

Shortly after Vera had left the Rectory, the new Archdeacon received a letter which almost caused the little hair he possessed to stand on end. It was from Mr. Hastings, saying that circumstances, which he need not enter into, rendered it impossible for him to remain another day in Woodford. So, deeply as he regretted putting his Rector to such inconvenience, he was obliged to leave at once. He did so with the less reluctance since his health had given way and he was quite unequal to doing any duty.

The Archdeacon-elect looked at the list of services his wife had insisted on having that week; several of which he had never even heard of and was quite incompetent to perform; and then, trembling with various emotions, he went to lay the matter before the wife of his bosom.

"It is very mysterious; Hastings is such a good fellow. I can't understand his leaving me in the lurch like this unless, as I fear, he is about to join the Roman Catholic Church," said the Archdeacon, as his wife finished reading the letter.

"Mysterious, indeed! Where is the mystery, I should like to know? Why, a child could see it is Vera who has left him in the lurch, not he you. After encouraging him all these months, she has refused him. That is the explanation of your mystery," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest angrily.

"Vera refused him! My dear, are you not arriving at a somewhat hasty conclusion? Does this letter warrant such an explanation?"

"There is no other. Not even you could have failed to notice his devotion to her, nor her apparent acceptance of his suit. May I ask what you intend to do, Archdeacon?"

The poor little Archdeacon trembled at his title, for his wife contrived to throw a certain emphasis on it which implied what a sorry Archdeacon he made in her opinion.

Sorry he was, and sad too, as he replied : " I really don't know. Some of these services must, I fear, be abandoned. I cannot undertake them single-handed."

" The services ! Do as you like about them. I alluded to your daughter's disgraceful conduct. What do you mean to do about that ? Do you intend this young man's future to be spoilt by her fickleness and Vera become the talk of the county, or do you intend to assert your authority and insist upon her marrying him ?" demanded Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

The Archdeacon was between two fires. He knew he had no more power to compel Vera to marry anyone against her will than he had to stem the torrent of his wife's anger. This he knew. But how to escape from the fray he didn't know, and all his scholarship could not tell him. Lemprière could not, Debrett could not ; but that third Book which lay on his table, could that help him ? He wished he could escape to consult it ; he had derived no little comfort from it latterly.

" Well, Archdeacon, will you answer my question, please ?" said his wife in her sharpest tones.

" My dear, I—I—really don't know. I—I—will do what you advise," replied the Archdeacon meekly.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest gave an angry snort, and then, after a moment's hesitation, answered :

" Very well, be it so ; I will deal with Vera. All I ask is that you support me."

This was by no means what the Archdeacon had meant, but he dare not raise any objection. All he ventured was to remark that Vera had a very high spirit, and any sharpness would rouse it. But a scornful smile was the only reply he met with ; and he retired to his study feeling very miserable and dreading Vera's return and the storm which he foresaw would then break out. One gleam of comfort shone through the gathering clouds : he had received permission from the rectoress to do as he pleased about the services ; whereupon the list was speedily reduced to very modest dimensions.

Meanwhile Vera, all unconscious of the storm which was brewing in her absence, was meeting with an adventure which made her think there was some sense in her step-mother's objection to her riding without an escort. She had taken a road which brought her home past the Grange ; Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's old home, now about to become the Archdeacon's home ; for his wife disliked Woodford, and had only been waiting till he was Archdeacon to leave the Rectory, where she had arranged in her own mind Vera and Mr. Hastings could live, and the latter do the duty : the Archdeacon, perhaps, preaching once a week.

Vera knew her father was going to move to the Grange in June, though she was not aware of the part of the programme which concerned herself. She did not know the house well, though, so she thought she would ride past it, and try to picture her father living there when she was married and in India with her husband. She was riding slowly, and thinking how different the Archdeacon's home-life now was from what it had been in her mother's lifetime. Then he had been master and mistress too; now he had not a voice in any domestic arrangements, but was, *nolens volens*, a slave to Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's fancies. Suddenly a man sprang from the road-side and seized Firefly's bridle. He was young and powerfully-built, and had Vera not had Lion with her she would have been utterly at his mercy. As it was, Lion was some way behind, having stopped to have a canine chat with Mrs. Tanner's terrier at the Lodge.

Startled as Vera was, she had the presence of mind to blow a little silver whistle, attached to her watch-chain, which she used to call Lion, and she trusted to his usual prompt response to save her from extortion, perhaps from robbery; for if once Lion appeared her fears would be for her assailant's life, not for her own safety.

"Your purse," said the man in an insolent tone.

"I haven't it with me. Let go my horse's bridle, please," said Vera, considering the chances of victory, in Lion's absence, if she defended herself with her riding-whip, for her blood was rising at the man's insolence.

"Your watch, then," said the fellow, with difficulty keeping his hold of Firefly with his left hand, for the mare was prancing about, and as anxious to break loose as her mistress.

As the man spoke, he put out his right hand to seize Vera's watch; but, instead of the watch, he caught her riding-whip, with which she struck at him. He snatched it from her hand, and threw it to the ground with a curse, and in spite of Firefly's fidgeting succeeded in snapping Vera's watch off her chain, just as Lion came bounding down the road to the rescue.

(To be continued.)



THE RESULTS OF A HUNT WEEK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GENTLEMAN STEPHENS," ETC. ETC.

I.

IT was the last night of the Hunt Week festivities of Ballaster, and its ball expected to be a nonsuch of the first water. The lights of the assembly rooms gyrated in every direction round its entrance, to which carriages perpetually drove up through a small multitude of lookers-on.

"There's the best of all!" said an urchin among the crowd; and few disputed the assertion as a dark-haired, bright-eyed girl in pink paused, among a cluster of opera-cloaked divinities, till her chaperon's train took itself out of her way. Under the blazing gaslights of the inner staircase it might have been seen that Agatha Ffoulkes had not unjustly taken the golden apple from her neighbours, and that the lady of the impeding train was well worthy to convoy a bevy of beauties to a ball. Was she not Mrs. Prideaux-Power, who had married one of the finest estates in the county and was very kind to the semi-invalid husband attached to its acres? And did she not value herself far less on that brilliant account than on being a highly-representative member of that family of long descent, the Poindexters, which had sent gallant warriors to the field and beauties to the altar, but had never produced one cool or prudent individual, whatever it had achieved in the way of scapegraces?

"Here's a good joke!" whispered she to Miss Ffoulkes, indicating a burly, stiff-backed elderly man, mounting the stairs in front of them. "Old Seaton and I hate each other like poison, you know, yet we always meet on these stairs and generally end by making our entrée together into the room! How d'ye do, Mr. Seaton? You are not going to cut me, I hope?" she ended, her nimble foot landing her on a level with the object of her remarks.

The stiffest of hands met the lady's finger tips, but a more cordial welcome was accorded her by Mr. Seaton's daughter at his side. The shrinkingly modest air of this fair maiden, while it formed half her attraction made people often pass her by at a first glance as insignificant; only to return perforce to discover she was refined and fair, and lastly to pronounce her lovely.

An affectionate hand-pressure passed between her and Agatha, and a softly-breathed, "I want so much to see you," drew the girls apart from the rest, so that they might enter the cloak-room together.

"Can you tell me if Lord Heliotrope is arrived?" asked Mr. Seaton of Mrs. Prideaux-Power, as one whose words were drawn from him under the thumb-screw.

"Not I," said the lady airily; "but he will have a rowing from me if he is not, for he promised we should open the ball in good time. I am half dead beginning, and shall never get my party together till the programme is done. How are you by this time, Mr. Pontifex? I was just saying I am not going to let this ball see many of the small hours. You have done for me, between you all, with such a week as this."

"Pardon us for disbelieving that, when your face speaks just the other way," said Ted Godfrey, a dark-eyed, handsome young man, with a laughing bow. "And we know Mrs. Prideaux-Power's pluck and good-nature never fail over the extra dance."

Mr. Seaton acknowledged this speaker's presence after the slightest fashion possible, while his daughter's cheek took a pink flush as she dutifully seconded the paternal lead. A markedly-warm greeting was given to Miss Ffoulkes by this gentleman and received also with a slight increase of colour and smile, both jealously noted by a chance occupant of the ball-room door, of whom more hereafter.

The ladies swept into the crowded cloak-room. Miss Seaton and Agatha secured a vacant corner, where, under cover of helping each other, they eagerly pursued a whispered talk.

"I have been on the tenter-hooks all day, and only saw Mr. Knight an hour ago," began Amy Seaton, arranging her white dress with whiter hands; "but *did* you see papa's reception of *him*? It was nothing short of insult."

"Your father is always so odd, it matters the less," were the words that came first to Agatha's lips; but she substituted: "It certainly was stagey; but perhaps a twice-rejected suitor could scarcely expect more. But is there really something important to hear?"

"Indeed there is," said Amy; "the hoped-for chance has really come at last. I am going to run away with Rick Pontifex. It was only finally settled on the race-course after you had gone that papa leaves the ball to-night with Lord Heliotrope, to go with him to-morrow to this sale of horses at Wroxton."

An involuntary start from Agatha showed the importance of the announcement.

"And you, dear; are you actually prepared to do it?" she asked in doubting accents.

Amy raised a deprecating glance to her friend's face.

"Yes, yes, of course," said Agatha, hastening to remove any impression of disapproval. "It is settled now, and there has been much to justify you in the step. Mr. Pontifex talked to me about it for ages last night at the ball, but somehow I did not think your father would go to the sale. And *he* meets you when, and where?"

"That he depends on hearing from you, for I had not seen Mr. Knight when we parted on the race-course, and I *must* refuse to dance with Rick to-night, though he is to ask me. Suspicion must

be kept at bay," she added, in half-reproachful reply to a sigh from Agatha.

"There is no help for it, I suppose," Agatha admitted. "I only gave a sigh to the necessity. But see, they are nearly ready. What am I to say to Mr. Pontifex?"

"We must be at the church at a punctual 8.30. Mr. Knight will be ready to marry us, and I can walk across the park with Olympe. Rick, of course, brings a carriage, and it will just give us time to catch the express. But, oh, Agatha, I have such a favour to ask you."

"A favour? Out with it, then, dear, and quickly. Mrs. Prideaux-Power has begun her second glove. What you have told me I will carefully pass on to Mr. Pontifex."

"I know it. But—but—if *you* could be with me, I should feel so much happier and stronger. It is such an ordeal to go through, and you do not know how miserable I am about it."

"That I can easily believe," said Agatha heartily; "but I shall be gone. I leave by the 8.31 train, as the express does not always stop at our little station. And, had I stayed, there would have been a hopeless obstacle in ——"

"Oh, no—no worse obstacle, I beg," entreated Amy. "Rick could manage about the train easily, and I should feel more like other girls getting married, and almost happy, if I could but have a bridesmaid, and that bridesmaid you."

"I am so sorry," said Agatha, pondering; "but it would not be right to implicate Mrs. Prideaux-Power. She would naturally prefer to know nothing about it."

"Would she?" said Amy doubtfully. "She is always very kind to me, and thinks papa so hard."

"That is just it," said Agatha firmly. "If she were better friends with your father, it might matter less."

"Ah, yes, I see," said Amy dejectedly. Then, brightening: "But why tell her? You will have ceased to be her guest—unless, indeed, you mind being mixed up with it yourself?"

"I don't," said Agatha. "Since the step is resolved on, I would gladly support you in any way; and it is true I should no longer be her guest. Ah! she is calling. I must think it over and let you know."

"Thanks, thanks; and speak about it with Rick when you dance together, he makes such capital suggestions," whispered Amy, on her own part hastening to rejoin her impatient father.

Agatha was one of that very select few who really take to heart the troubles of a friend. This Hunt Week, in which she had taken part, had given her food for reflection on a more personal score, but she stood now at her chaperon's side, fastening the last buttons of her long gloves, absorbed in mental survey of a picture, black enough, of which Amy was sole heroine.

A tap on the shoulder recalled her to herself with a start.

"How much for the thoughts?" said Mrs. Prideaux-Power. "Is that poor little Miss Seaton in any trouble? I should never be out of it if that squire of starch were my father."

"She has a trying time of it often," said Agatha, longing to tell, but resisting the impulse honourably. "And it is such a pity, for he evidently loves her dearly after all."

"'I will kill her first and love her after,'" laughed Mrs. Prideaux-Power. "Not but that I adore old Seaton after a fashion; and the best fun I get nowadays is baiting and chaffing him. Come along, girls! I never saw such a pack of incapables, keeping Agatha and me all this time!"

The usual group of men stood around the principal entrance to the ball-room, and among them the individual already noted as taking heed of a lady's passing blush and smile. Ted Godfrey had been mentally reposing on no "grassy lawn" this week, and had made a league and covenant with himself several times that the vales and lancers of to-night's programme should wail and warble for other ears than his. That the Spaniard's proverbial *She was the cause of this gloomy resolve* may be safely assumed, and hope played fast and loose with him in most tormenting fashion. He could not say that she had been otherwise than gracious to him, at times, but to balance these ecstatic moments remained the fact that throughout the week wheresoever Miss Ffoulkes was found there also was Rick Pontifex. Only last night, at an intermediate dance, sandwiched between the two hunt balls proper, he had surprised the pair in a conservatory in deep colloquy at which, from the silence that followed his entrance, no third person was evidently desired.

Then and there he vowed to himself that he would leave them to themselves in conservatories and everywhere else thenceforth to the crack o' doom, and having no other personal interest in seeing the week out, determined to depart after the races with those whose world is governed by that noble animal, the horse. None the less, few will be surprised to hear that among the first to appear at the assembly rooms was Ted Godfrey, and that he saw with eyes of glass, as it were, the many types of beauty that filed past till that one should come that had cost him more anxiety than tranquillity of late.

A young exquisite, called Charley Byce, loquacious and vain, but not devoid of heart, touched his elbow.

"How well Lady Ruth Percy looks to-night," he said. "Did you hear me urging her last night to keep to pale blue?—and you see."

Ted looked indifferently towards the lady indicated.

"I do," he said laconically. "Are not you going to dance?"

"I think not," arching his eyebrows in critical survey of the ladies unclaimed. "Ah! here comes Mrs. Prideaux-Power. There is always something worth looking at in her train. And am I not right? Just oblige me by a glance at that pink dress."

Ted's eyes had shot there fast enough on his own score, and the "little look across the crowd" had passed between its wearer and himself. What it implied from him he knew but too well, but perhaps on Miss Ffoulkes' part no more than instinctive recognition of an ardent admirer.

Uncertainty, however, is hope. Less neglectful of Byce's butterfly remarks than utterly deaf to them, he advanced direct to that same pink dress. Two trains and a burly M. F. H. delayed him a second, and that second had landed Rick Pontifex at Miss Ffoulkes' side. He was speaking in undertones while entering his name on her card for early dances and late. Of that coveted card Godfrey next secured possession. He was midway, mentally, between fury with Rick and relenting towards Agatha, on account of a charming hint of deprecation in her reception of himself, and inscribed his name as often as allowed. He was proceeding to claim the last dance when he found his rival's initials already there.

With a grim bow he restored the offending card, and scorning to dance more than absolute decency required, returned to his doorway, whence Charley Byce, despite his bravado, had been easily beguiled to join in the tramp and swing of the opening quadrille.

Mrs. Prideaux-Power, claimed by Lord Heliotrope as partner, was among the magnates at the top of the room, her charges dispersed among the dancers.

In close attendance on Lord Heliotrope and his party stood Mr. Seaton in a state as near beatitude as his nature permitted, titles possessing for him that magnetic charm so apparently soul-satisfying to those affected by it, and so curious an enigma to those who are not. In themselves, however, the Heliotropes well merited regard, and public-spirited, energetic and affable, Lord Heliotrope was no unfamiliar figure in an opening quadrille. With his eldest son danced Amy Seaton, as was noted approvingly by her father; for on the growing attentions of that young man to his daughter he was founding just now the most delusive hopes.

Mr. Seaton's property was situated close to that of Mrs. Prideaux-Power, illustrating the aphorism: "If I had seen you less I might have liked you more," while Ted Godfrey owned a snug property near, that match-making mothers were ready to provide with a mistress on the shortest notice. Ted was a good-looking, well set-up man of twenty-eight, and a favourite with his own sex as well as the fairer, even Mr. Seaton according to him confidence and liking.

Another estate near, that had been of much consequence in the past, was represented by Rick Pontifex; but extravagance had diminished its acres, and the present owner in early youth seemed inclined to follow in the wild footsteps of his forebears.

Happily he had "pulled up in time," and although his inheritance was not what it might have been, he was still a decided parti, and

could claim to be presumptive heir to a barony. The only son of the present Baron, however, being in the prime of life, this fact gave him a poetic rather than a marketable value in the eyes of an ever-prudent society.

Between his family and the Seatons the relations had for generations been stormy, from causes that are unconnected with the matter in hand, and though no actual feud existed now, a strained attitude was still maintained. When, therefore, a Montagu and Capulet attachment sprang up between Rick and Amy, it received no favour from Mr. Seaton; and two proposals from Romeo had been refused by him, although accepted by Juliet, with an increasing plainness that did not tempt to a third essay. Young Pontifex, however, was no "limp" suitor, and very much in love, and rash enough to forego the question of settlements, had won a promise from Amy to elope with him at the first opportunity: such as that which offered now.

Agatha Ffoulkes did not actually disapprove of the elopement, for Mr. Seaton, though an indulgent father in some respects, had strained his prerogative unjustifiably far in resisting the joint entreaties of the young couple. Rick's wild oats were fairly done with, and he showed no inclination to renew the crop. No other objection to him could justly be formed.

The marriage was to be performed at a little church close to the Keep, the brave-hearted Rector of which, after long remonstrance with Mr. Seaton on his conduct to his daughter, now of age, apparently felt himself justified in performing the ceremony.

Perhaps Mr. Seaton scented conspiracy in the air; but anyhow, he had become suspicious of his own shadow as regarded Amy's movements, and rarely left home without her. But an invitation from Lord Heliotrope was one of the few baits he could not resist, and this absence of a few hours gave the lovers the chance they had long been watching for.

No wonder that Agatha had blushed at sight of Rick, so implicated did she feel in the plot; for as the persecuted couple could rarely get speech of each other, she had been as Ambassadress between them during the Hunt Week; and so much in Rick's company as to suggest to many, less interested than poor Godfrey, the idea of an attachment between them. Even Mr. Seaton had been caught by the notion, and imperceptibly relaxed his vigilance over Amy; for Fate is a humourist of the first water, with a distinct relish for making us minister to our own catastrophes.

As a preliminary antic she resolved on making him to-night the subject of that impish form of entertainment—a practical joke—and found an instrument to hand in Charley Byce.

This youth, in the midst of raising Mrs. Prideaux-Power's ready laugh by his flowery devotion, had stooped so low as to make her question whether he was going to crown it by kissing the hem of her

garment. Instead of that, he "rose to the surface" with a gold bracelet set with diamonds in his hand, picked up on the lady's voluminous train. The pair were good friends, and it was an understood jest between them that he should address her in terms of bombastic adulation.

"Allow me to restore these beautiful gems," he said, *à la* Sir Percie Shafton, "to their more brilliant owner."

"Well, you will have no hindrance from me in doing so," she said, "since the bracelet is not mine. It must have dropped on my dress, and I know whose it is. It belongs to Lady Heliotrope."

"Not to you, alas ! But you are right as ever, for I think she is already looking for it," said he. And a few yards off, indeed, a sweet-faced dowager was directing a search among some gentlemen near.

Mrs. Prideaux-Power and her companion were advancing with the treasure trove, when they had to pass behind Mr. Seaton, who unconsciously blocked the way.

"What a joke it would be to pop it into his pocket and let it be found there," whispered Charley to his friend.

"No, no ; it would be too bad, and he would be furious," she answered in the same tone, but with a smile that weakened the force of her words.

Practical jokes savoured too much of the rash not to have attractions for the hair-brained Poindexters. It was not in Charley Byce's nature to resist the slope of folly when encouraged by a lady's smile.

"Yes, yes, you mean," said he ; "why, we can explain it all afterwards." And suiting the action to the word, he dropped the bracelet into a pocket of Mr. Seaton's from which a handkerchief protruded.

Once committed, Mrs. Prideaux-Power entered with energy into the acting.

"What is the hunt for ?" she said, advancing to Lady Heliotrope.

"For a bracelet of mine, dear," explained that lady innocently. "It was on my arm, I am positive, ten minutes ago, and it cannot be far off, for I have not been near the other end of the room lately."

With a rapid glance Mrs. Prideaux-Power had ascertained that the group around was composed only of a few intimates, or at a public ball even she must have forbidden so risky a jest. As it was, she saw no time was to be lost or the matter would get wind further afield.

"Why, Lady Heliotrope," she said, "I vote you institute a search in the gentlemen's pockets. Someone may be detaining it as a souvenir of you, you know !"

"That is scarcely likely," laughed Lady Heliotrope, who had willingly left her youth far behind her. And Godfrey, who was beside her, added : "It would be more to the point to look about us a little more."

At a hint from Mrs. Prideaux-Power, however, that some joke was a-foot they paused.

"Here goes ! I am willing to be accused of any proof of devotion to Lady Heliotrope !" said Charley Byce, turning his pockets, with suspicious alacrity, inside out, while Lady Heliotrope looked on with amusement, tempered by misgiving.

With some chaff and laughter the other young men followed suit to Charley, and a pleasing variety of handkerchiefs and cigar-cases were brought to view ; but, naturally, not the bracelet. Mr. Seaton stood on the outskirts of the group, looking on with some gleams of benignity on the follies of his juniors.

"Come, Mr. Seaton, you are not to shirk," said Byce, with the easy self-assurance of one who believes himself on the right side of fashion and fortune. "Now for it, you know."

"I may be excused, I think," said the gentleman, stiffening a little. "Such proceedings belong to you young men."

"Oh, but Lady Heliotrope insists !" said Mrs. Prideaux-Power ; "you cannot disobey orders." And though a kindly disclaimer came from the lady quoted, Mr. Seaton's hand had begun the circuit of his pockets, the luckless search ending, after a start, that shook him from head to foot, with the production of the bracelet. He held it out almost helplessly.

"I know nothing whatever about it," he said in shaking tones that could scarcely articulate words. "It is all some vile nonsense ; and I swear—I swear—but that there are ladies present ——"

"Of course—of course ! We all see it is some foolish jest," said Lady Heliotrope, hastening to receive the gems from the hand that seemed to loathe them, and with kindly tact taking the hand itself cordially in her own. "These young men are demoralised by the Hunt Week. I fancy the perpetrators are not far to seek."

"Well, I must confess to being the worst delinquent," said Mrs. Prideaux-Power, advancing promptly, while a buzz of agreement went through the group with the last speaker's words. "You are not going to be angry with us, I hope, Mr. Seaton ? The bracelet dropped on my dress, and your pocket was too temptingly handy ; so we just popped it in and kept our apologies ready."

"Till I ask for them, perhaps," said Mr. Seaton, with unrelenting sternness, and lips still quivering. "You have exposed me to suspicion in the most unjustifiable fashion, and I decline to see any fun in the matter."

"No, *pray* don't say so," entreated Lady Heliotrope, seconded by her husband and several others. "A joke is but a joke, after all, ill-judged though we must confess this was. And here is Mr. Byce waiting to be heard, I fancy, as a partner in guilt."

"More than that, Mr. Seaton," said Byce, coming forward with much deprecation of manner and not more persiflage than habit made inevitable. "Although Mrs. Prideaux-Power tries so kindly to shield me, I am the sole sinner. She warned me not to do it, and I can only say I wish I had taken her advice."

Mr. Seaton glared at the offender a moment and mumbled something about age having been held in more reverence when he was young.

"Behold the proof that you and age are not associated together," said Charley insinuatingly; and then with sufficient heartiness: "I am really very sorry I did it, and shall take it very kindly if you will forgive me."

Straightforwardness was not without its charms for Mr. Seaton, who was himself strictly upright according to his lights.

"Say no more of it," he said. "Whatever my age may be, yours can serve as an apology."

And if the acquittal had its damper for Master Charley's vanity, he had the sense to welcome it with cordial thanks.

"A foolish matter wisely and kindly condoned," said Lord Heliotrope approvingly, with assenting murmurs from all around; while Mrs. Prideaux-Power went on:

"That's right, Mr. Seaton; and now we are all straight again."

"I understood Mr. Byce was solely concerned in the matter," said Mr. Seaton, not without a grim ambiguity, as he moved away.

"He was," said the lady; "only perhaps I might have interfered more decidedly, had it seemed worth while." Then, unable to resist giving a Roland for his Oliver, she added: "Take care, or you may get a worse jest played on you than that."

At a distant corner of the room, Agatha Ffoulkes had been seated during this joust of pleasantry, giving ear to Rick Pontifex, who could think of little but to-morrow's escapade. Godfrey had taken note of the prolonged talk and the animated faces of the couple from first to last, and it did not tend to make him tolerant over the bracelet business.

"I am really vexed I annoyed the poor old soul," said Byce to him, sotto voce.

"And so you ought to be, and ashamed to boot," rejoined Ted aloud, and with indignation in the protest; and was quite unaware that Mr. Seaton had heard his words, not without a twitch of satisfaction.

"Of course, I can secure the express stopping while you get out," Rick was saying; "it is only a question of a second. You say you have no maid luckily, so I will tell you how we will manage the rest."

Agatha had been repeating the difficulties that stood in the way of her attendance at the wedding.

"I undertake a messenger from the Rectory shall meet you as you drive down with a note. You will say you are wanted at the Rectory and get out; send them on to the station with your luggage, and bid them tell Mrs. Prideaux-Power, when they get home, that you had been unexpectedly detained, but would follow your property by express. All that will wash, I think?"

Agatha folded and unfolded her fan in abstraction.

"I certainly should cease to be Mrs. Prideaux-Power's guest when I leave her carriage," she said. "The fear of implicating her is my only real objection, for I would gladly be with dear Amy otherwise."

"It is her greatest wish," said Rick eagerly, looking to Godfrey, watching jealously afar, as if he were vehemently urging a successful love-suit. "The wish of us both. You will promise not to fail us, then? We shall want someone to toast us figuratively if not actually over the daring deed!"

"About the toasting, I don't know," said Agatha, laughingly. "And you know I am a poor friend to elopements generally—but I will come if you undertake the note reaches me on the road."

"Trust me," said Rick, "and we will thank you with all the honours in our own house, I hope, ere Time gets a much more hardened sinner."

Agatha's was one of those rare souls that in ball-rooms as elsewhere seek always some "poor" to aid, some "sick" at heart to "medicine," some happy one to crown with completeness of sympathy. It was well she held these resources to fall back upon, for on her own account she did not enjoy that ball, and her dances with Godfrey least of all. Their last valse together took place just after the confidential tête-à-tête above related. Stern disappointment was in Godfrey's face as he claimed the dance, not unmingled with reproach at Agatha's supposed coquetry, and not unnaturally it awoke in hers the hauteur of one unjustly accused. Then and there, with a man's obtuseness, he abandoned hope for the seventeenth time that week.

"I will not expose myself to rejection from Pontifex's betrothed bride," was the refrain to which he whirled round whatever the liquid valse measure called itself throbbed out by the band; while Agatha accompanied him to a similarly blythe burden of:

"If he prefers circumstantial evidence when he might have truth for the asking, he must take the consequences."

His unjust anger roused her spirit, of which she had no small share, and provoked her into praises of the ball, less ingenuous than her usual speeches. Not being engaged to Godfrey for any further dance left her free to remark, with a glance at her filled-up card:

"I am glad to think there are some dances remaining. It has been such an unusually pleasant ball, one would like to have it prolonged."

"For my own part," said Godfrey, "I shall be at some pains to avoid Ballaster Hunt Weeks in future. They don't seem to minister much to my enjoyment; and I find more pleasure elsewhere." And if the first part of the speech was candid, the last rivalled that of his partner's for joyless insincerity.

II.

A FEBRUARY sun, lighting up the damp hedgerows into sparkles, and drying the moss that spread beneath the leafless brown trees in the churchyard hard by the Keep. It was a little church, with a grey old tower, lending strength and nobility to the lowliness of its structure, and every window of it to-day looked musingly aware that a wedding was being celebrated within.

A fair, fair bride, with touches of anxiety and gentle dejection breaking the serenity of her sweetness ; a handsome bridegroom, full of energy and ardour, and dark enough to afford the right contrast to the lady of his choice ; a kindly-faced couple, the one performing, the other abetting the ceremony. A beautiful, dark-eyed girl completing the group, and efficient in rendering those offices to the bride that a sister is fain to offer on these memorable crises of life.

Over is it ? And the parting kisses given, and the carriage off, not without its tribute of slippers, thoughtfully provided by the genial Rector's wife, ardent in the cause of good luck. Then Rick and Amy are really one at last, and the home of the Seatons is daughterless and deserted.

But still the rose berries make bright the briars in the hedges, and the distance is glistening in tremulous response to the February sky.

Noon, and raining off and on. Miry ways and streets, where the horse sale goes on at Wroxton, and ulsters and umbrellas to the fore.

Mr. Seaton stood on the outskirts of the crowd with Lord Heliotrope and Ted Godfrey beside him, and pulses calm as the rain falling mildly around. Charley Byce, just arrived on the scene, made for the trio, and having still some stirrings of compunction towards Mr. Seaton, sought and honoured that gentleman's opinions as to the horses with more deference than such an exquisite often vouchsafed.

"I was at Lovelane Station this morning," he said, "and had the pleasure of a bow from Miss Seaton in the express. I did not know she was leaving home."

Mr. Seaton turned his eyes suspiciously on the joker of last night.

"That must have been a mistake of yours," he replied ; "my daughter is at home."

"Oh, but no, positively," protested Charley, who was far too vain to allow his statements to be challenged with impunity. "I was on the other platform, it is true, but I saw that pretty French maid of hers take her some coffee, and she was talking to ——"

"Mr. Byce, is this another jest ?" demanded Mr. Seaton sternly.

"On my honour, no," said Charley. "I was not aware there was —perhaps I was mistaken after all."

"To whom did you say my daughter was talking ? Was she travelling alone ?"

Mr. Seaton jerked out the words from whitening lips—misgiving had preceded certainty.

"Why, I could not see very well, but I fancied it was Rick Pontifex," stammered the wretched Charley. "I daresay there were many more in the carriage—one sees nothing across a platform. I say, that mare's paces ——"

But feints were useless. Mr. Seaton had staggered backwards against Ted Godfrey's arm. All was confusion for a few moments. Lord Heliotrope and the young men drew him aside from the crowd, undid his neck-cloth and gave him air. It was not a fit, as they feared, however. He rallied in a few seconds, and waved aside suggestions of remedies as well as palliation or denial of what had been seen.

Charley Byce had to recapitulate all he had seen, and amplify as much as possible, and did so in a manner from which all pleasantry had departed. It was the nine o'clock express, and as far as he could see the young people were alone in the carriage.

There was a pause.

"It is useless to follow," Mr. Seaton said with nervous slowness that would fain have passed for composure. "I must order a fly and go home at once. God grant there has been a marriage. Godfrey, you are an honourable man, will you come with me? It is a favour; but I am getting an old man, and did not know it till this minute."

Over the heavy roads, flanked by the bare hedges where, between the showers, blackbird and robin sang, the carriage swiftly sped. Scarcely a word passed between the inmates, but on seating themselves Godfrey offered a hand-shake in mute sympathy. Mr. Seaton responded with an agitated grasp, and still, as the milestones were left behind, sat looking ahead, his thoughts almost visibly outflying the horses.

Ere the gates of The Keep were reached the laurels and lawns of the Rectory came in view, and Mr. Seaton motioned to Godfrey to stop the carriage.

"Get out," he said hoarsely, "for I cannot, and see what has taken place."

He sat very erect, a centre of sensations rather than thought, and Godfrey soon returned.

"They were married this morning," he said, with kind brevity; "the Rector wants you to come in, and I think it will be best, if you can bear it."

What need to give the interview that followed? The pent-up wrath and pain of Mr. Seaton burst forth with scathing violence; the Rector justified himself firmly and with moderation. But to some passionate natures calm in an adversary is the one unpardonable crime, and Mr. Knight, who was a wise student of human nature, perceived at last that fire to fire, even in form of rebuke, would act better here than soothing and deprecation. If his own blood was up

to aid the suggestion and point his words, he was not aware of it till brought to book later by humble self-scrutiny.

"Reproach not your daughter or me, Mr. Seaton," he said, with severity that soon took a crescendo form. "Reproach yourself alone. You were entreated and counselled in vain. No good reason could you show, yet you deprived your daughter of her woman's right of choice, and expected her to be happy with baubles and luxuries that you gave her for your own gratification rather than hers. Don't speak to me of love. What love worth the name have you shown her? You are allowing yourself to grow into a tyrant, oppressing your fellows and dishonouring your Maker. Go home and ask yourself what part you have in love, and whether you have studied what it really means in God or man."

After these words, spoken with flashing eyes (it was by no means the first encounter between the two), there was little to be done but back out of the Rectory as fast as possible, and the fly was soon at the hall-door of the Keep.

A tempest that has lashed the waves into yeast with fury, yet unspent, might typify Mr. Seaton's aspect, but he refused Godfrey's earnestly-repeated offer to remain with him.

"I will see you another day," he said, and they were the first words he had uttered since their stormy exit from the Rectory; "but to-night I must be alone." He put his thanks into a silent but fervid shake of the hand, then passed within his own doors, butler and footman trying not to look as if the secret of the little church had reached their ears some guilty hours ago.

Godfrey gazed after him with compunction, so desolate in misfortune did he seem, but his companionship he could no farther intrude. It was yet early in the afternoon. He turned to the flyman and ordered himself to be driven to a mansion ten miles off: Ffoulkes Manor. Agatha's share in the conspiracy had been casually revealed in Mr. Knight's statements.

That February afternoon of showers, the news of the elopement sped fast around the wet country-side. The departure from the station had attracted notice, and it was soon known that Miss Ffoulkes had accompanied the young couple no farther than her own station. Birds of the air carried the news of the wedding direct from the church tower, and by the time Lord Heliotrope and Charley Byce had told what they knew to their special friends, the unenlightened were in a minority. The latter, in mysterious asides, put Mrs. Prideaux-Power in possession of the facts. She had brought in a drag-full of visitors to the horse sale. On hearing that Agatha Ffoulkes had been seen with the runaways, and realising that she had changed her train on getting a message from the Rectory, her mother-wit pieced the story together at a glance.

"She knew everything," she said, with conviction. "I shall never forgive that girl as long as I live!"

III.

WITH head erect, Mr. Seaton passed by his servants and shut himself into his library. He was a good master, but subject to violent fits of passion on provocation, and none of them would have taken a month's wages to have told him the news with the face he wore just then. It was patent to all, however, that this had already been done, and what supplement was needed lay in a letter left by Amy, which they had put in a conspicuous place on the library table.

Mr. Seaton was aware of it ere ever he sat down, but in the tumult of his emotions, let it be—let the question rest unsettled whether he should even open it or not. The elopement seemed to have happened long ago, somehow, but his passions were at white heat, his indignation crying out for justice.

"I have given her no love worth having, have I?" he kept wrathfully repeating. "It was for my own gratification, not hers, I surrounded her with luxuries. I, a tyrant, I! I will make that man, Knight, crawl on his knees to beg my pardon. I will ruin him with his Bishop. I will——" and then he passed his hand across his eyes, for the words that next sounded in his ears were, "oppressing his fellows and dishonouring his Maker."

"It is not true," he broke forth vehemently, speaking aloud. "I am an upright man of good character, I reverence my God, and Heaven help me, I know what love is better than did the daughter who has forsaken me."

A nightmare of conflicting tortures seemed on him, and he knew not how time went by. He took and read the letter rather as a diversion from than climax to the situation, and followed almost mechanically its exculpation from blame of all now remaining under his roof, its entreaty for forgiveness—just one word of pardon. It was a touching letter, and though the excuses for her conduct were fully and firmly stated they were urged also with humility. The sense of the letter seemed scarcely to reach him. "Oppressing his fellows and dishonouring his God," were the words with which he put it down.

He did not farther dispute the terms, but a grim smile came on his lips.

"It is pleasing to know the character attached to our name. Knight has told me what manner of man I am, and the country will exult beyond measure, no doubt, at the discomfiture of such an one! I had a foretaste of it last night: I, and no other, was the victim of their infernal jests. Mrs. Prideaux-Power sails with the stream, and knows whom to insult. And by all the powers," he cried, starting up in his chair, "was there not a threat in her words, that some worse trick might be played me? She has concocted this all, and sent her friend to act for her, and now this minute mocks at me with all the country-side!"

The hands that gripped the arms of his chair had fury in their touch.

"They shall be baulked," he said, "the false dissemblers. They shall see me unaltered by one sign when I go among them, and for the rest they get no more invitations here. As for Knight's pride, it shall be humbled in the dust—in the mire before me. I'll get him a Deanery, and he shall know it is to me he is beholden for it. If ever arrogance and treachery deserved a fall, his do; arrogance alone, perhaps, for the knave spoke truth when he said he had warned me what would happen. But his insufferable pride will wince under an obligation, and he shall eat the dust under my feet. Heaven forgive and pity me, for I am a very miserable and erring man."

How the one sentence attached itself to others so unlike might have puzzled a bystander, but the language of his face echoed the last words alone. Still as a stone he sat, with that stricken look, gazing at the gathering dusk settling down chill and mournful on the dreary scene without.

Then the door opened. He had noticed no bell or bustle of arrival in the distant hall, and looked up in amazement now, for Mrs. Prideaux-Power entered at the door.

"Oh, don't be angry with me; please don't," she was saying, as she advanced, leaving him no room to wedge in a word. "I am so very, very sorry to hear this wretched news. Directly they told me, I felt I must come to you at once. We have been at loggerheads sometimes, you and I (no, don't speak), and I have chaffed you shamefully and all that, and you were very wrong to keep her so strict—very; but oh, nobody in the world is so sorry for you now as I!"

What is there in truth, that at a word it wins its way against prejudice and proof? What in warmth of heart, that suspicion and anger fly at its approach? Mr. Seaton grew white to the lips.

"She had no right to do it; none," went on the guest. "You would have relented if she had only given you time—you know you would; for there is nothing against Rick Pontifex now, and though it was hard on her, she would have been none the worse for waiting a little longer."

Mr. Seaton gave another convulsive grip to the chair he stood by.

"God bless you," he said, "for the only one who has spoken the truth about me yet. I would have relented if they had gone on persisting. It was my duty to prove what his steadiness was worth, and I had other hopes for her. But I would have relented; I would—only it was too hard on the poor child, and she will never know it now."

"Not know it!" said Mrs. Prideaux-Power, bursting into tears. "What is to prevent her knowing it, as long as I have a tongue to tell her? and I cannot bear to hear you making excuses for her! She has behaved shamefully to you, I think."

"Don't agitate yourself; pray don't," said Mr. Seaton. "Then you had nothing to do with this?"

"I!" she answered. "Not I! I hate to see girls oppressed and countenance many elopements, but not this—your only child. And the affair had not gone on so very long. I could not believe my ears when Charley Byce told me, or rest till I came to you."

"But Miss Ffoulkes was there," objected Mr. Seaton.

"And had left my house," explained Mrs. Prideaux-Power, meekly submitting to a cross-questioning she would have resented in calmer moments. "I am very angry with her all the same, but never mind about her now. I have always behaved so badly to you, Mr. Seaton—I think I am the most odious woman under the sun when I get on my high horse—and there was that foolery last night on the very eve of this, and you were so wonderfully good about it. Just say you forgive me and will let me be friends with you in future, and I shall go home with a lighter heart."

Mr. Seaton turned his back on her hastily, and made no answer, but was it a rebuff? He staggered to the mantelpiece and laid his head against the marble slab; the hands that concealed his face shook. There was silence in the room, broken only by a lady's sob. The Poindexters were always an excitable race. Mr. Seaton moved at last, and coming to Mrs. Prideaux-Power took both her hands in his.

"I thank you very greatly for your kindness," he said, with an attempt at his usual formality that was pathetically unsuccessful; "and I shall be honoured if you care to call me friend. You have come to me at a sorrowful, nay, at a very awful moment of my life; more awful than can even be told. Is there anything I can do for you to prove I am not ungrateful?"

The tears were running down Mrs. Prideaux-Power's face.

"Forgive them, if you can," she said; "it will be so much better. But if you cannot, never mind, for I will be friends with you just the same, and will never forgive Agatha Ffoulkes then, either."

Did some yearning desire of his heart jump with the suggestion?

"Can you wait for me to write a short letter?" he asked.

"An hour," she answered, moderately. And Mr. Seaton took up Amy's pleading epistle, and sat down to his portfolio to write.

It is not easy for pride and obstinacy to pardon, to own to wrongdoing on their own part, to submit to a future of mutual forgiveness, new relations and new times. Prompt measures are the wisest when the course has been resolved on, but only love can make them palatable; human love, that can compass the test and be content; diviner love, that calls its hardness sweet. With hand grown firmer, Mr. Seaton directed his envelope to a London hotel named by Amy in her letter.

"Will that do?" he said to his new-found friend, giving her the missive to read.

"Mr. Seaton, you are the best of men," she answered in earnest and affectionate tones; "such a letter ought to break her heart, and make her happy for life."

"You are satisfied?" he asked.

"Satisfied?" she echoed contemptuously. "And do you know, Mr. Seaton, I believe we have always been the best of friends without knowing it. Extremes meet; and you may depend upon it, 'dearest foes,' who can never let each other alone, only want an excuse to drop the mask, and be the staunchest of allies. Their case, at worst, is ten times more promising than the friends one is always disinclined to see."

He escorted her to her carriage with marked deference, and, that done, despatched one letter only by the evening mail.

Then he wrote another note, and sent it with some pheasants to the Rectory. It ran thus:

"DEAR KNIGHT,—Forgive and forget, and dine with me to-morrow night at 7.30. You may do so without offence to your conscience, since I have pardoned the child you told me I did not love.

"Yours, G. SEATON."

He had scarcely accomplished this, and leant back in his chair to review the many consequences that must arise from his actions and those of others on this never-to-be-forgotten day, when yet another unexpected guest was announced.

"Pardon this late visit," said Charley Byce, advancing rather excitedly, "but I could not help coming to tell you the news that arrived at Wroxton just before I left. There has been a sad accident to Major Vere; Rick Pontifex's cousin, you know; and in short, poor man, he is actually dead."

"You don't say so!" said Mr. Seaton, shocked. "Why, this is truly terrible."

"Terrible," said Charley, trying to look concerned. "But," he added, breaking forth into an irrepressible smile, "you did not know him, I believe; no more did I; and sorry for him though one is, one cannot help being glad that only old Lord Champion's life stands now between Pontifex and the barony. Don't say you cannot feel it so, if only as a favour to me. After that confounded joke last night, and bringing you bad news, however unconsciously, to-day I must seem to you like a bird of ill-omen, and I did so want to surprise you at last with something pleasant."

Mr. Seaton glared at him a moment, then put out his hand.

"You are a very foolish boy," he said, "and very wrong to think the tragic death of any man could be pleasant news to me; but I believe you are straightforward and I think good-hearted. Go now, for I want solitude sorely; but you will be welcome to the Keep whenever you care to come."

And then Mr. Seaton's solitary dinner came and went, and the long winter's evening passed away in thought—in thought that made an epoch in his life; thought that led him to the bar of the past and sternly pronounced him guilty; thought that showed him

where the path lay that would guide him to the company of the strivers after good, from whose ranks he could not bear that fate should part him.

Charley Byce's news would have gratified the self of yesterday ; to-day he had passed beyond such vain delight. " And his golden crown of empire never wore he from that day " might have been truly quoted of Mr. Seaton thenceforth in a hundred senses. For his was an honest nature, and laying to heart as he did that severe but most salutary sermon of his Rector's, he shrank with something like terror from any relapse into his former ways, lest for the brief remainder of his days he should dishonour his Maker to the end.

Full of crotchets and obstinacy still, he yet endeared himself to that country-side to a remarkable degree, for a genuine self-discipline carries conviction with it and commands respect. And for the rest affection has its caprices, and asks sometimes with no attempt at justification, " Do roses stick like burrs ? "

And Rick and Amy found him the most loving of fathers ; Mrs. Prideaux-Power and Charley Byce the most indulgent of friends ; while to no visitors was his welcome more cordially extended than to Ted Godfrey and his beautiful wife, Agatha.

For at Ffoulkes Manor that memorable February afternoon, when the purple clouds were rolling away still trimmed with sunset's glory, two lovers strolling through a wet and leafless shrubbery had found it very Paradise after a meeting of reconciliation and joy that neither could ever forget.

" And you never wish to attend a Hunt Week at Ballaster again ? " said she.

" Never intend missing one, you mean," he answered, catching her eye with a lover's quickness ; " for when I want a type of what is bright without alloy I shall think about this Hunt Week and call it my ideal of bliss."

" Then how was it I did not enjoy last night's ball in the least ? " asked Agatha, affecting to muse.

" You did," said Godfrey. " For you knew one wretched being was breaking his heart about you all the time, and that a few hours must put an end to his blunders, when he would come to tell you—as he really has, you see—that the lady who wore pink silk was the only one at the ball he really saw, and she the only one of all earth's daughters he cares to win for wife ! "

For in the earnestness of mutual vows and noble resolves for a wedded future, tears had been in the air, and it seemed well to gild their departure with a ray of loving jest.

"ECCO ROMA!"

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.



ARCH OF DRUSUS.

AS we stand upon one of the seven hills of Rome and gaze around, Nature herself appears to be in harmony with the vanished glories of the city. Cypress trees meet the eye on every side, and beautiful as they are, they are also melancholy. Their pointed heads bend to the breeze and whisper sadly of the days that are gone. You might almost fancy that, like the Monks of La Trappe, they are murmuring to each other and to you the sad warning of *Memento Mori*. In many of the gar-

dens outside Rome you will find long groves of these pointed cypresses, only a degree less stiff and formal than the poplars of which the French are so proud, and which for mile after mile line so many of their country roads, casting their long straight shadows as the sun declines.

Above the Forum to the south-west rises the Palatine Hill, crowded and covered with the ruins of the Imperial palaces. The extent of these palaces, the wealth that was wasted upon them, the wanton destruction only to build up again as it seemed, can scarcely be

realised. The ruins of the palace of the Cæsars and of the baths of Caracalla are amongst the most extensive in Rome. The latter are on the Appian Way, and a few years ago, like the Coliseum, were famous for the beauty of the flowers that grew in wild profusion amongst the ruins. Now all traces of flowers have disappeared. Upon these ruins Shelley sat and wrote "*Prometheus Unbound*," as he relates in his preface. "This poem," he tells us, "was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirit even to intoxication, were the inspiration of the drama."

All this has passed. Scarcely a sign of verdure or vegetation remains. Whatever the Eternal City may have gained by the change of government, she has lost infinitely in point of beauty. The ruling powers have no respect for dead-and-gone Rome. Under the Papal rule, on the contrary, everything was venerated and preserved. The flowers that adorned the ruins were as sacred as the ruins themselves. Under New Rome Old Rome is fast disappearing. The change that has taken place is probably only the beginning of demolition.

"Let us go round to the Jews' quarter," I said to our guide Rossi, the morning after we had reached Rome. "I remember how it interested me the last time I was here."

"Yes, sir, let us go," replied Rossi, with, I thought, a curious smile and intonation. "I heard you say to Sir Mauleverer as we stood on the Palatine Hill that the trees seemed to whisper '*Memento Mori*.' Then in the Jews' quarter, if there were any trees there, they ought to be chanting a Requiem."

The Jews' quarter had certainly been one of the most interesting parts of old and inhabited Rome. Enormous palaces, once the abode of the great and powerful, were now densely populated with members of the Hebrew tribe. Many of the doorways still bore the arms of nobles who had long since decayed or died out. Through the magnificent gateways there now passed to and fro a very different crowd. What once had been given over to state and pageantry was now degraded to the uses of the despised race, with whom, like some of the monastic orders, uncleanliness is thought to be a virtue.

Many of the countless windows had been protected with iron bars, and glorious old ironwork, worth the ransom of all the Jews that lived and struggled behind them, delighted one with its exquisite tracery. The lights and shadows of centuries lay upon the walls. They were gigantic monuments of a time that had been; not remote as the days of the kings, but old enough to possess much of the matchless beauty and charm of antiquity.

We went round, and presently came upon a large open space ; a perfect wilderness of bricks and rubbish ; an absolute picture of desolation and destruction.

“But what is this?” I asked, bewildered. “I have never been here before. Is this a part of Rome recently discovered?”

“This is the ancient Jews’ quarter,” replied Rossi, with quite a triumph of melancholy regret. “It is all absolutely razed to the ground.”

“But at this rate everything will go!” cried Mauleverer. “The Forum and the Coliseum will become a tradition. The very ruins will soon be nothing but a name.”

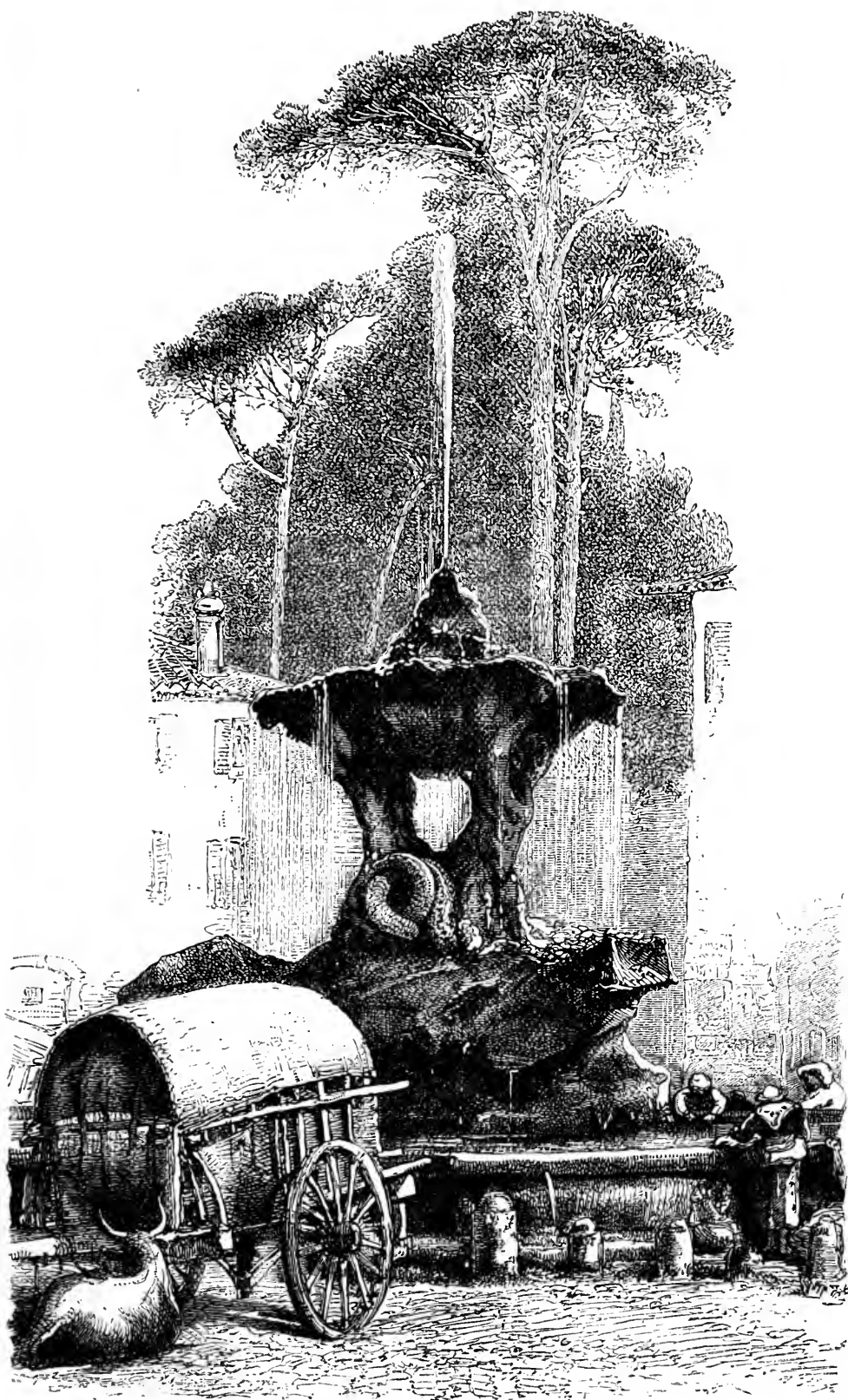
“And they even talk of draining the Tiber, Sir Mauleverer,” returned our guide laughing. “When they do that, I shall emigrate to some new world across the seas.”

Here indeed was a melancholy sight. It might very possibly conduce to the health and prosperity of modern Rome. No doubt quite a small town of wide streets, and wholesome tenements would arise in place of what had been ; but one of the most curious and interesting and characteristic parts of the Eternal City had proved a contradiction in terms by disappearing for ever.

As regards the healthiness of Rome much has been said and written. There are seasons when it seems very fatal to human life ; more especially to the life of foreigners. At certain times of the year, at sundown there rises a mist which appears to be laden with the germs of disease and death. It is now supposed to be the effect of some parasitic plant, which at that hour sends forth its germs upon the air, and these insinuating themselves into the human frame carry out their fatal work. Who has not had friends who have gone to Rome in the flush of health and vigour, have taken the so-called Roman fever, and never returned again, or returned only to die ? In time, possibly, these things will be understood and science may make Rome as healthy as any other city ; but for the present she needs to be visited with caution when spring has fairly set in. Discretion is then the better part of valour, and it is no proof of cowardice to run away.

We went one morning to the Appian Way, perhaps the most interesting of all the drives or walks about Rome. Every step of the way seems classical ground ; full of absorbing recollections, associations and traditions. The ruins are numberless ; and over many of them is thrown a perfect halo of romance, relating both to sacred and profane history.

At one point, where the roads divide, you find the small church of Domine Quo Vadis, with its beautiful legend, and containing what is said to be a copy of a footprint of our Saviour, the original being in the Basilica of St. Sebastian’s on white marble. Many of us know the legend. . . . How St. Peter, escaping from Rome from the persecutions of the Christians, was met by our Lord approaching



FOUNTAIN OF NEPTUNE.

the city. “Domine, quo vadis?” cried the disciple in astonishment. “Lord, whither goest Thou?” “To Rome, to be crucified a second time,” replied the Saviour, looking at Peter with gentle reproach; and then vanished. Peter, accepting the rebuke, returned to the city and eventually suffered martyrdom.

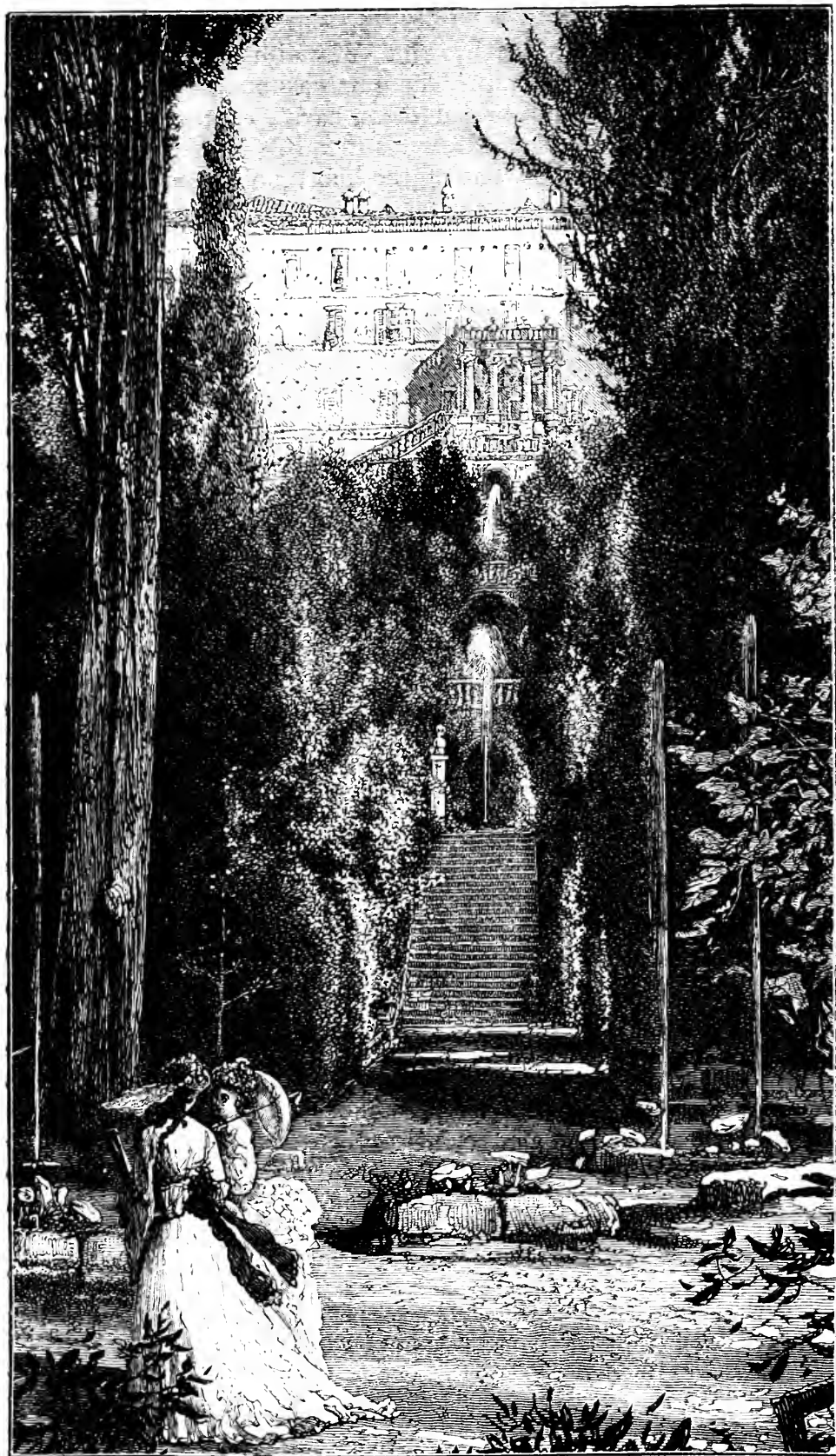
The Appian Way was the most celebrated road leading from Rome out into the world. It was commenced in the year 312 B.C. by Appius Claudius, and in time reached as far as Brindisi. But the interesting portion is that which is nearest Rome. Here you have a crowd of ancient monuments on the right hand and on the left.

Passing out by the Porta Capena, one of the first things to arrest the attention are the ruins of the baths of Caracalla. The immense extent of these baths when they were in their glory can scarcely be conceived. Their area is said to have been one hundred and forty thousand square yards, and one thousand six hundred people could bathe in them at one time. They were fitted up with every conceivable luxury. It was these and other baths, the time wasted in them, the luxurious habits they gave rise to, which are said to have in great part laid the foundation for the decline of Rome.

The Claudian Aqueduct emptied its waters into an immense reservoir; and it was the destruction of the aqueduct which contributed to the disuse and ruin of the baths. To this day the ruins of the Claudian Aqueduct are amongst the most picturesque and beautiful of Rome. The broken and crumbling arches stretch across the flat country of the Campagna for a distance of six miles. No ruin without the walls of Rome is to be compared with it in charm and extent. Nothing more loudly proclaims the former greatness of Rome, the gigantic power of her people, than the record of her numerous and immense aqueducts.

Near the Porta Capena also once stood the Temple of Mars, where the victorious armies were wont to worship on returning from battle; and near it was the tomb of the murdered sister of the Horatii. Horatius, history relates, was returning in triumph, when he met his sister near the gate. She was promised in marriage to one of the Curatii, and seeing that her brother wore a cloak which she had embroidered with her own hands, and given to her betrothed, she at once guessed his fate and was overcome with grief. Upon which Horatius, enraged that his sister should weep at the death of his enemy, drew his sword and stabbed her. No trace of the temple now remains. It is near here, also, that it has been determined was the site of the Fountain of Egeria; and in this Valley of Egeria the oppressed Jewish race was confined by Domitian, tortured, and frequently put to death.

Beyond this lies the tomb of the Scipios, found in 1780, in a vineyard on the left, the most ancient of all the tombs yet discovered. The celebrated Sarcophagus of Lucius Scipio Barbatus



TIVOLI.

was removed to the Vatican by Pius VII., with the bust of Ennius, the friend of Scipio Africanus. The bust was found in the catacomb, and Ennius was no doubt buried there, having expressed a wish that his remains should be placed near his friend Scipio Africanus. The life of Scipio Africanus is one of the most noble and disinterested records in the history of Rome, and his celebrated tomb was erected to his memory by his wife.*

Further away on the right are the wonderful catacombs of Rome. It is said there are so many miles of them that if they were placed in one continuous and drawn out line they would reach from one end of Italy to the other. These catacombs, the ancient Christian cemeteries of Rome, were commenced in apostolic times, and used as burial places until Rome was taken by Alaric in the year 410. The Christians also held religious assemblies in the catacombs.

They are chiefly interesting by reason of their antiquity and the atmosphere of sanctity which surrounds them. Here the early Christians worshipped and often took refuge, surrounded by their beloved dead. The passages and galleries are innumerable, and a guide is absolutely necessary. Lights are, of course, needed also. At one moment, when visiting them, we became separated from our guide, and the feeling that we might not find him again was somewhat thrilling. Rossi did not know his way about them any more than we did. He had nothing to do with underground Rome. The catacombs might easily become a living tomb. When, after some minutes, we found the guide distractedly wandering up and down in search of us, his torch suddenly went out, and we were left in darkness. This was adventure number two, hardly less exciting than adventure number one. Fortunately, we were not very far from the entrance, and we felt that before adventure number three took place, we had better return to the outer world. The third time never being like the others, might prove fatal. We had no wish to remain in the catacombs for ever.

Beyond this is one of the most interesting and romantic of the monuments on the Appian Way, the tomb of Cecilia Metella. It is indeed the last of its beauties. The ancient families of Rome were in the habit of building monuments to their dead by the sides of the public roads, and so perpetuating their memory. With them, death was supposed to close all, and was therefore as sad as it seemed—a final event. Their ideas of reunion were vague and shadowy.

What remains of the tomb of Cecilia Metella is a circular tower,

* The monument erected to the memory of Mrs. Henry Wood, and lately placed over the vault near the catacombs in Highgate Cemetery, is an exact copy of the tomb of Scipio Africanus. It is needless to add that the tomb was chosen for the beauty and simplicity of its design, and without reference to the Roman warrior. Yet the two lives may furnish a parallel in so far as that both were heroic, self-sacrificing, steadfast in duty, full of high and earnest aims and noble aspirations.

about seventy feet in diameter, dark with age, and built with amazing strength. It stands at the end of a stream of lava which flowed from an eruption at the base of the Alban Hills. Above the frieze and cornice is supposed to have been a conical roof, such as is often seen in the cemeteries of the East and occasionally in those of the Jews. The chamber which held the sarcophagus, about fifteen feet in diameter, is now empty. The ashes of Cecilia Metella have been scattered to the winds. Her beautiful white marble tomb has been desecrated to secular uses, and is now a fountain in the court of the Farnese Palace. We remember the well-known lines in "Childe Harold":

"There is a stern round tower of other days,
Firm as a fortress with its fence of stone,
Such as an army's battled strength delays,
Standing with half its battlements alone,
And with two thousand years of ivy grown,
The garland of eternity, where wave
The green leaves over all by time o'erthrown;—
What is this tower of strength? Within its cave
What treasure lay so lock'd, so hid?—A woman's grave."

But the casket that held the treasure was to remain long after the treasure had been stolen. The name of Cecilia Metella alone remains: a name in itself sufficiently beautiful and romantic to suggest an idyl. As such it will go down to earth's latest records and it may be that her tomb will last as long. Time can scarcely destroy it; but what time would save, we see that the hand of man is frequently merciless to spare.

In travelling down the Appian Way, there is a figure that is ever before us. It is that of St. Paul. That verse in the Acts seems to ring in our ears: "And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns; whom, when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage." One can imagine the meeting; and wonder who the brethren were, and how many in number.

It was from the height above the Appian Way that Paul first saw Rome: a magnificent city of baths and temples, theatres, colonnades and palaces. It was on the Appian Way that he journeyed on one of the most memorable epochs of his life. Here that he passed under the arch of Drusus and through the Porta Capena and so within the great walls of the city, to the Forum itself. Here he arrived a prisoner from Jerusalem, having appealed from Agrippa unto Cæsar. We know how he sailed from Adramyttium; all the perils and vicissitudes he went through; how the angel appeared to him before the shipwreck assuring him that he must come before Cæsar; how the barbarous people of Melita were kind to them all when they had escaped to land; how three months later they sailed in a ship of

Alexandria, the Castor and Pollux, and landed at Syracuse ; tarried there three days, went on to Rhegium, thence to Puteoli, and so on to Rome. We know how Julius, the centurion, "courteously entreated Paul," and we love him for it ; and we wonder how he fared in the hands of the Captain of the Roman Guard. Well, we suppose, as he "was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." And finally we know that Paul dwelt here two whole years in his own hired house, "and received all that came in unto him."

Then, later, came his martyrdom. He had once entered Rome by the Appian Way, and once more and for the last time he trod it on his way to death. He was beheaded outside the Ostian Gate, at a place now called the Tre Fontane. It is said that Peter and



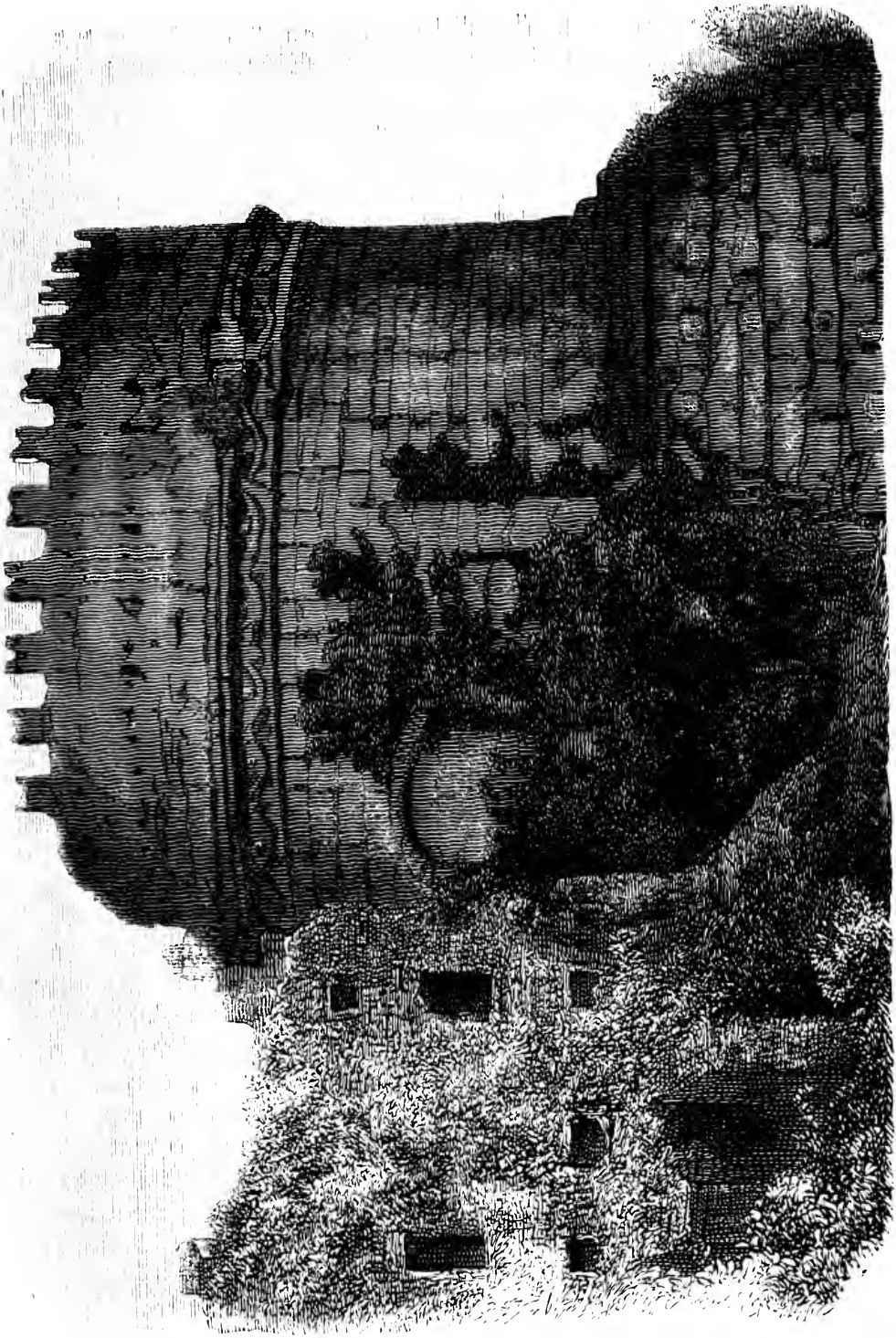
ON THE APPIAN WAY.

Paul both suffered martyrdom on the same day—the 29th of June : the one beheaded by the sword, the other, as we know, crucified with his head downwards. The place where they are supposed to have separated is now marked by a small chapel. We can imagine their farewell ; parting so soon to meet again ; full of hope and triumph, having fought the fight and run the race.

Then St. Paul went onward down the straight road, and here, the legend says, he met Plautilla, the Roman matron. She, overcome with sorrow, besought him to bless her. Paul then asked her for her veil to blind his eyes at the moment of execution, promising to return it to her after death. And it is recorded that he appeared to her after he had been beheaded, and restored the veil stained with blood.

A magnificent monastery once existed at the Tre Fontane, but now nothing is to be seen except three small churches and a few ruins.

It was one of the unhealthiest parts round Rome ; and when in 1867 Pius IX. bestowed the convent upon some Trappist monks, it was



TOMB OF CECILIA METELLA.

said they would not long have to murmur to each other their sad and solemn warning.

In one of the three small churches, that of S. Paolo, is the pillar

St. Paul is said to have been bound to, and the block of marble on which he was beheaded. It contains also the three fountains which, tradition says, sprang from the ground as the severed head bounded forth and three times touched the earth. When all was over, the sorrowing Christians removed the body to the catacombs to await interment.

On the site of St. Paul's martyrdom a magnificent Basilica was built, and must have stood out nobly on that desolate plain, under the blue Italian sky. The first church was erected in the time of Constantine. Here once had been the vineyard given as a first burial place for St. Paul by Lucina, a Roman matron. As time went on the church was added to and embellished, until its magnificence was unparalleled. On the 15th of July, 1823, the church was burnt to the ground, and all its beauty and magnificence perished. On that night Pius VII., dying, was disturbed by a series of dreams in which some great misfortune had happened to the Church of Rome. Several times he started out of his sleep asking if nothing had occurred. The terrible misfortune of the burning of the church was concealed from him. He had lived here in days gone by as a monk and teacher; he loved it above all other earthly spots; and the knowledge of its destruction would have disturbed his last hours.

The rebuilding of the church was begun without delay, and it was re-opened in 1854 by Pius IX. The exterior appears to possess no point of beauty, and the interior is shorn of most of those treasures of art for which the former Basilica was famous.

Yet nothing can exceed its simple dignity and grandeur. Its great point is the nave, which is three hundred feet long, and two hundred feet wide, with four ranges of granite columns on each side, resting on white marble bases. The floor is of marble, so polished that everything appears reflected. The roof is flat, and a beautiful specimen of carved wood. The light is subdued.

The aspect of this nave, the fine perspective of the forest of columns as you look upon them and through them, impressed one as few things in religious architecture can ever do. There is a simple grandeur about it scarcely to be equalled. The outlines are broad and distinct. There is no minuteness of detail to arrest or disturb the eye. The whole scene is solemn, almost sublime. One longs to be able to pass a lifetime in this elevating, refining atmosphere; to come here day by day and pass hours under its influence. If I possessed the purse of Fortunatus, or the lamp of Aladdin, or the resources of Vathek, I would immediately raise myself a new Hall of Eblis, and it should be an exact copy of the nave of S. Paolo.

But such ambitions in these days, when magic has ceased, must be kept for dreams and visions. And if we only dream long enough and vividly enough, perhaps we are equally happy. Possession does not always mean beatitude. Many of our happiest times are those when we are still chasing our Will o' the Wisp. The pleasures of

hope are the greatest of all pleasures. To exercise the imagination is the most intense of all enjoyment: and possession leaves nothing to the imagination.

So the nave of S. Paolo was not to be ours. We had to depart and leave it behind us; leave it to its solitude, its singular dignity and grandeur, its perfect aspect of rest and repose. Even to St. Paul himself, who had so much dignity of mind, it would have appealed with strange force. For ourselves, we left it with reluctance, and with many an aspiration that we might some day see it again.

We returned homewards, and on our way visited the cemetery near the Gate of St. Paul. It is one of the most interesting spots in Rome. The surrounding country is barren. Here the dull, grey walls raise themselves, within which you see the tall, sad cypress trees bending to the breeze. The iron gates were closed, and a bell startled the air with a wild clang in answer to our summons.

After a time the gardener came forth apparently from the very extremities of the ground and admitted us. This is the new cemetery. Of the old, which is very near it, Shelley once wrote: "The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." It lies under the shadow of ruined walls, where, the gardener told us, snakes and lizards find their habitation.

In itself the new cemetery is sad and sombre. It is bounded by the old Aurelian wall, which on this side seems to possess all the sadness of ruin and decay without any of its charm. The graves form its melancholy attraction. Many of them are sad records of lives cut short; lives that, visiting Rome in youth and health, have fallen victims to fever or other causes. Its monuments ought to be a succession of broken pillars.

But the grave to which all footsteps turn, and which is the most interesting of all, is that which contains the heart of Shelley. His body, we know, was thrown up by the sea at Spezia, and burnt upon the shores of the gulf. Painful enough are the details given to us. The grave is on the slope, under the old wall. It is a simple flat stone, darkened and stained with damp, on which no great care is bestowed. Yet there it is, with the record of Leigh Hunt:

"PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY,

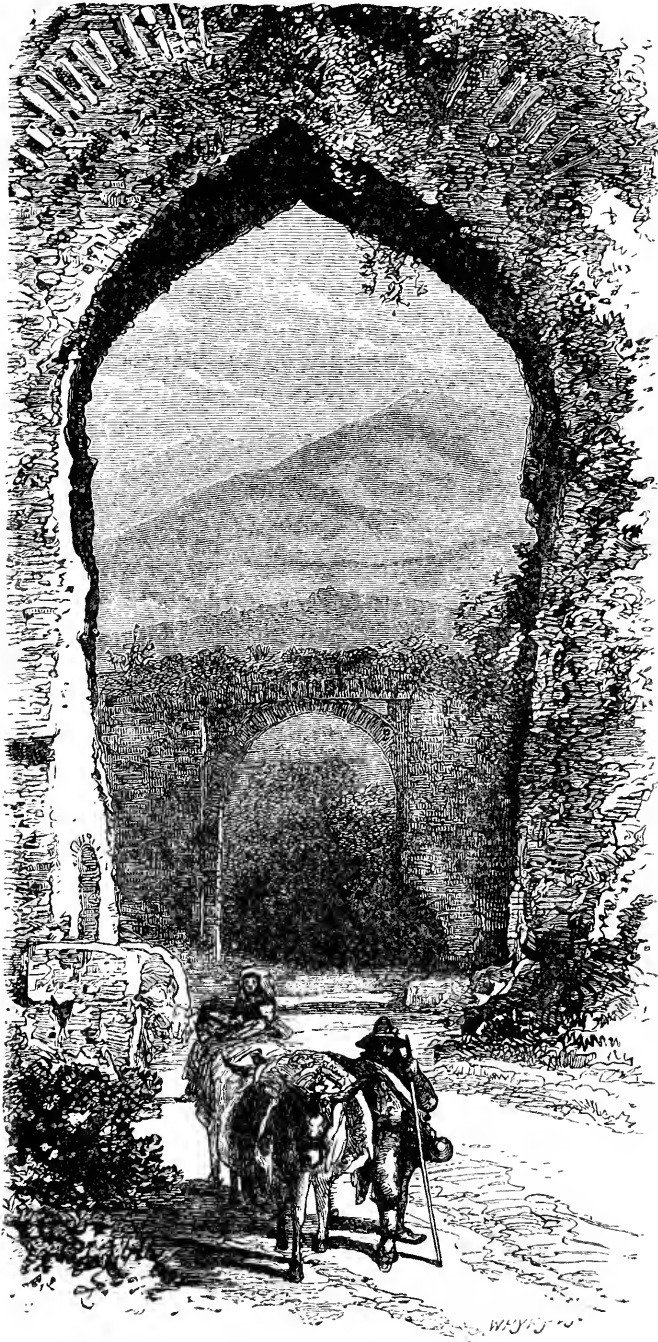
COR CORDIUM.

NATUS IV AUGUST, MDCCXCII. OBIT VIII JUL., MDCCCXXII."

And beneath it the lines added by Trelawny from Ariel's song; lines which Shelley himself had always loved:

"Nothing of him doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."

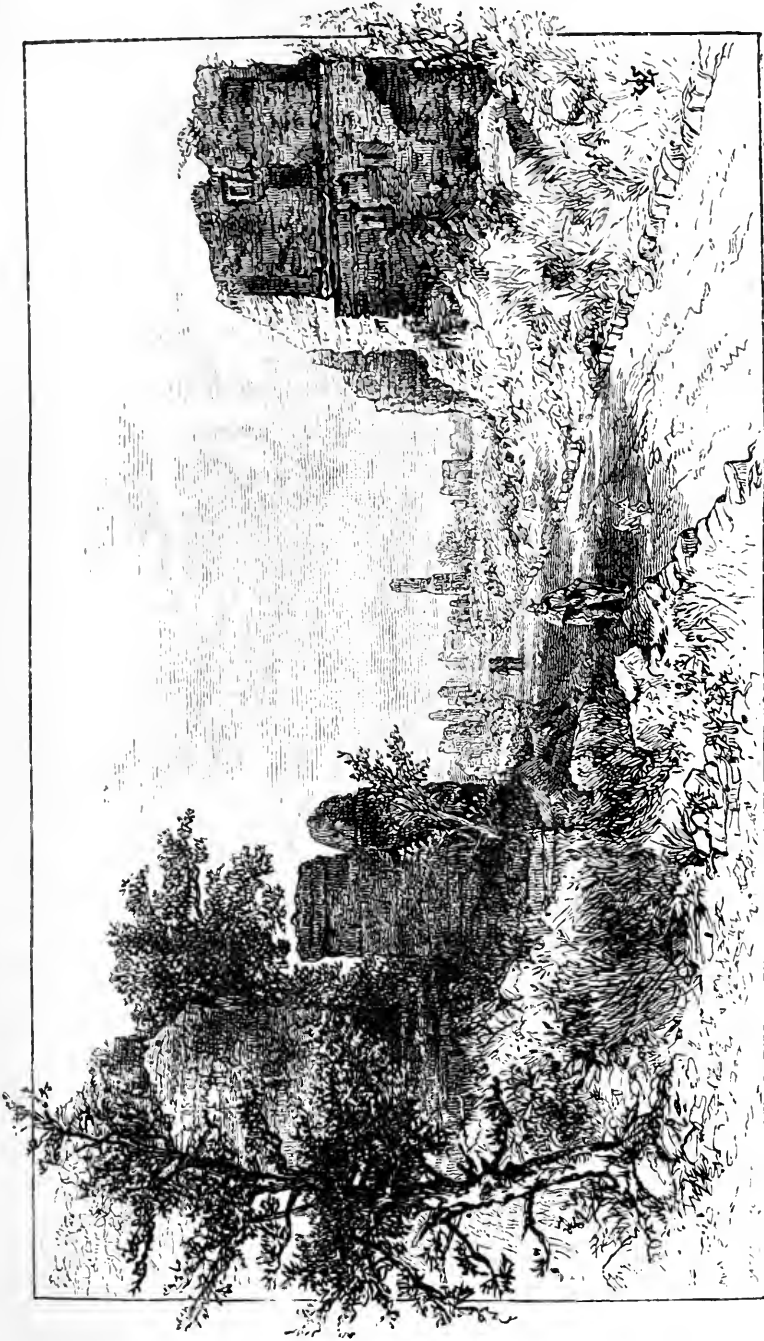
The grave is very simple and quiet. Under the shadow of the wall it even has something very sad and depressing. Yet perhaps



AQUEDUCT NEAR TIVOLI.

this chiefly lies in the imagination, which associates the tomb with all the sadness that veiled the life of the poet. That rare and beautiful mind; that power of thought and expression; that capa-

city for the highest and best that is in man : marred by so much singular weakness, so many flaws ; that groping in the dark after the mysteries of the unseen ; needing a sign from heaven



ON THE APPIAN WAY.

for the strengthening of his faith ; unable to trust to faith alone ; impatient at times to pass beyond the veil that all the great unknown might become the known ; and which, alas for the world, came all too soon to him. What, we wonder, were his emotions when suddenly he stood face to face with death ?

The grass that grows round his grave is somewhat rough and coarse, and violets bloom and perfume the air; and we pluck a leaf reverently and put it away as a memento. The pyramid of Caius Cestius almost overshadows it; the cypresses whisper an eternal requiem. "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity," they murmur. "All that's bright must fade." Mutability sums up the history of the world and mankind. We are birds of passage. Yet through that gateway of St. Paul's, down that Appian Way, there once passed a martyr who gazed upon that pagan tomb, that Pyramid of Cestius; and the record of his life, possessing the faith that could remove mountains, will shine as the stars for ever.

We passed out of the new cemetery; the iron gates closed behind us; and we crossed over to the old accompanied by the gardener, who possessed the keys of admittance.

Here is a grave as interesting as Shelley's and almost as sad: that of Keats. Unlike Shelley's it can be seen from the roadway, and its inscription may be read. The grave is an upright stone. It is more open than Shelley's, warmer and more sunny; but the epitaph is more comprehensive and more sorrowful. The words are partly those of Keats himself, dying in the days of his youth and in the bitterness of disappointed hope and ambition.

"This grave contains all that was mortal of a young English poet, who, on his death-bed, in the bitterness of his heart at the malicious power of his enemies, desired these words to be engraven on his tombstone:

"'HERE LIES ONE WHOSE NAME WAS WRIT IN WATER.'

"FEBRUARY 24, 1821."

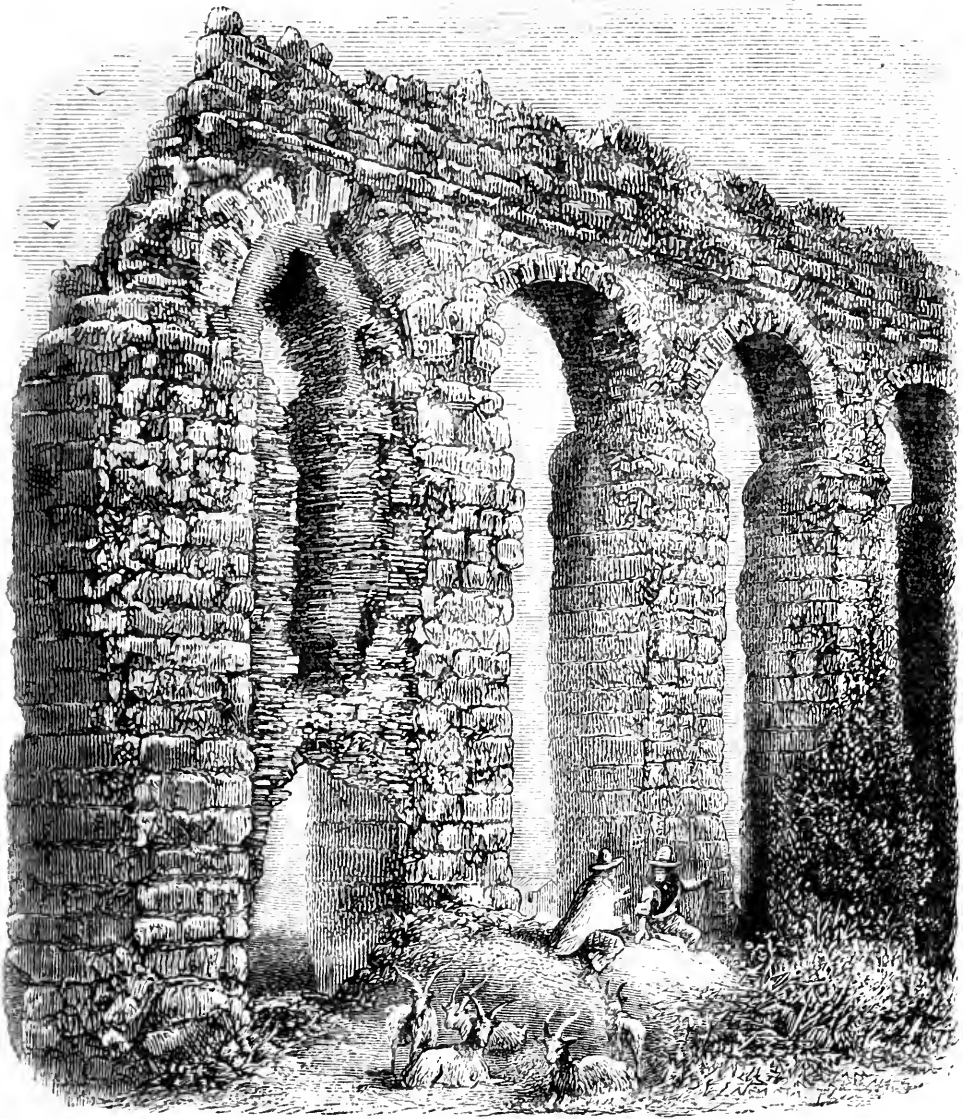
And Shelley's lines so well describe it.

"Go thou to Rome—at once the paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds and fragrant copses dress
The bones of desolation's nakedness,
Pass till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green recess,
Where like an infant's smile over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

"And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid, with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath."

In Keats's life there was more of human sadness than in that of

Shelley, but more of the divine trust. Keats had not Shelley's morbid doubts and difficulties in regard to the unseen ; but his short life is an unbroken record of sadness and unhappiness. None of the joys of earth were his. His heritage of genius brought him only pain. He died unappreciated, his end probably hastened by that



IN THE CAMPAGNA.

"malicious power of his enemies ;" an exile ; lonely and alone. Shelley had many joys and pleasures. To be happy was a necessity of his being. Yet how morbid, how sad, were many of his days and hours ; for under the necessity for happiness, there lurked for ever the shadows of doubt and melancholy. What a halo of romance entwines itself about the names of those three poets, Byron, Shelley and Keats. How associated are they with the sunny land of Italy,

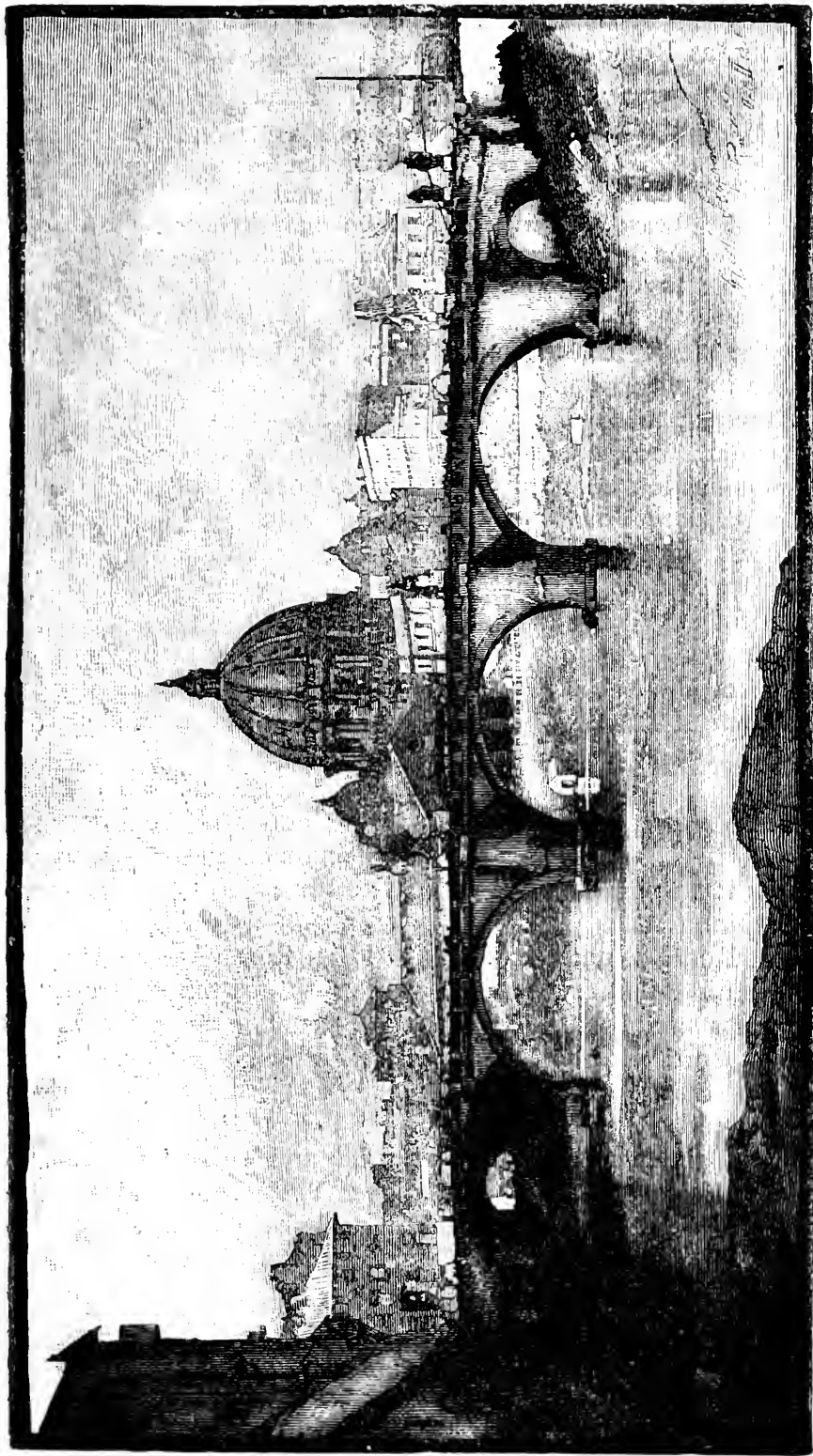
seeming a part of herself and her history as much as the names of her own heroes. Who speaks of Ravenna and does not think of Byron; of Spezia, and does not dream of Shelley; of Rome, and does not muse on Keats? For their sake alone Italy would be linked to every English heart, and all the records that have been left of them are dear to us.

We left the cemetery to its dead, with the sad records and associations. We bade the gardener farewell, who, though having the charge of these graves, little recked of the sentiment they arouse in others' breasts. The last we saw of him he was carefully examining the old walls, poking the holes with a stick he carried, in search of snakes and the huge lizards that take up their abode there. He seemed to have quite an affection for them, which showed itself in a delight in killing them. A strange way of proving affection, but who shall measure the workings of the human heart?

We passed once more through the gate of San Paolo, and again entered Rome, with all its charms. For awhile we paused near the Bridge of St. Angelo, and watched the waters of the flowing Tiber. On the opposite side frowned the noble castle of St. Angelo, so conspicuous a feature amidst Rome's monuments. Here again we gazed upon an ancient tomb—for it was once the tomb of Hadrian, built by himself in the first century. Many others were also entombed here. Then in time—to such base uses do we come—it was turned into a fortress, and, once at least, became a papal refuge. The bridge near it is one of the few ancient bridges of Rome still existing. It also was built by Hadrian, and beneath its arches for nearly two thousand years those silent and secret waters have flowed. Will they go on flowing for another two thousand years? And what will the world be doing then? Will knowledge have increased and the reign of magic be here? Will the words of the arch enemy of mankind be fulfilled: "And ye shall be as Gods?" It would seem so. For knowledge is to be increased and men shall run to and fro upon the earth; and it is all coming to pass.

Yet the eternal decree, So far shalt thou go, will never be overcome. Each in his little world has his day, and then for him cometh the end. The elixir of life, this we shall never find; not even to adding an inch to one's stature or making one hair white or black. We are mortal, and each must pay the penalty and pass through grave and gate of death to the everlasting realms beyond the veil.

Not only the cemeteries of Rome, but Rome itself is a vast monument of the dead, holding up its eternal warning. For her came the handwriting upon the wall: Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin: and we see the record on every side. In the halo surrounding Rome sorrow and sadness are largely intermixed. Perhaps it is one of her charms, for there are Pleasures of Melancholy quite as much as there are Pleasures of Hope: and this element of regret points unconsciously to the day when sighing and sorrow shall flee away.



BRIDGE OF ST. ANGELO

Shakespeare himself might have stood on one of the seven hills, and gazing upon that matchless scene of departed glory, have written the words, as Rome's epitaph :

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherit, shall dissolve ;
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a wreck behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

But the life of Rome has been great and wonderful. Her sleep has been long, and her dream is eternal. So far she may well be called the Eternal City. Though all traces of her former greatness disappeared ; though her monuments were all desecrated until one stone was not left upon another ; the outlines of the seven hills, the slow and silvery Tiber, the vast and melancholy Campagna, would be sufficient until the end of time to plunge one into dreams of the past, and visions of martial glory and worldly pomp and pageantry never before rivalled, never since approached.

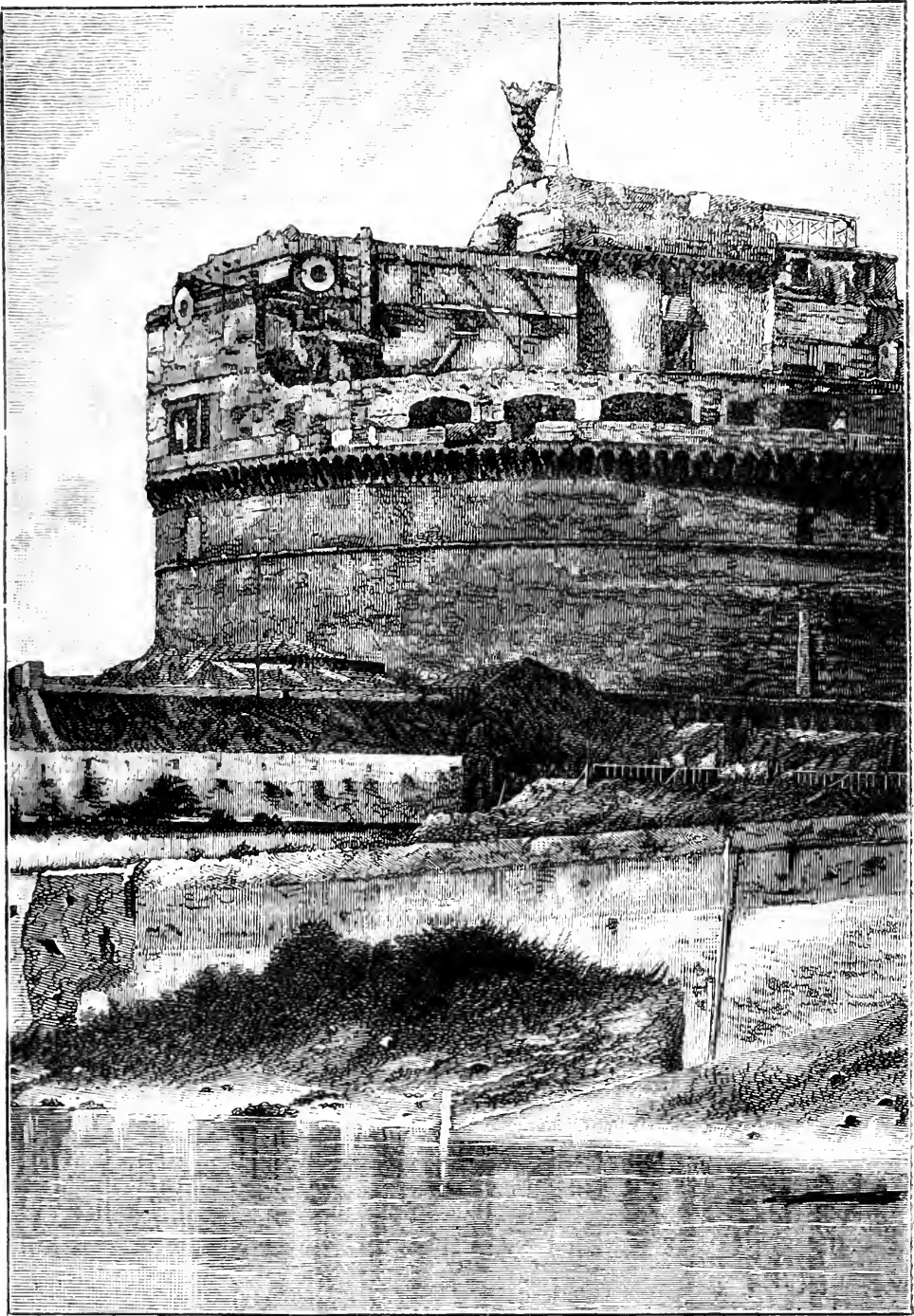
We read of the glories of the Babylonian empire, the greatness of Persia, the influence of Greece, the reign of Venice ; we are told of the wisdom of the Egyptians, the riches of a Solomon : but do any of these affect us as does the magic word Rome ?

"Which do you find the more interesting, Pagan or Christian Rome ?" asked a friend the other day ; and how, amidst such an embarrassment of wealth, the recollections and traditions of the past, was it possible to draw a comparison ? All reaches the very height of interest.

Pagan Rome is more remote : Christian Rome has all the beauty and softening influence which religion throws upon her votaries : Barbarity is swallowed up and disappears under the greater spell of an awakened conscience ; of a charity which is the great lever of the world ; of a still small voice which becomes more and more heard and followed, and elevates and purifies.

But Pagan Rome is full of a wild and rugged greatness and grandeur which commands our highest admiration : all the greater, perhaps, that those times and influences have passed away for ever. The great religious drama which took place nearly nineteen hundred years ago has changed the face of the world for ever. Though all religion died out, and men became universally sin-stained and corrupted, still they would be only that. The rugged dignity and power of paganism could never return. It is gone for ever : and with it all its majesty. It has given place to what is far better, but less outwardly visible. What may be called the Ceremonial of Paganism has yielded to the Spiritual influence of the Unseen. This world is not all in all now, as it was then ; and those who are

wise amongst men remember that the sad and solemn *Memento Mori* is annihilated in the glorious *Resurgam*.



CASTLE OF ST. ANGELO.

But for past Rome, Christian or Pagan, there will be no earthly resurrection. If she now became the greatest and most glorious city in the world, still she would never be Rome as we understand

the word. For the present, she still lives in our eyes by means of her "solemn temples, her cloud-capp'd towers"; and when these have finally disappeared, she will still live in the imaginations of those who shall come after, clothed with beauty and romance; once the great mistress of a great world; the beloved of a great people; the controller of destinies; directing the course of nations and of the whole universe with an influence which will end only with time itself.

"ECCO ROMA!" It is almost with the eyes of faith and fancy that we now repeat the words. All, all has passed away. And we pass with it: our little lives, our brief authority. It is the inevitable law. Nowhere does it come home to us more forcibly than when standing under the old walls in the cemetery of Rome, listening to the sad and whispering cypresses: or than when, tracing the outlines of the famous seven hills, the eye wanders from the proud cupolas of to-day to the sad but refined ruins of the once great and glorious Forum.

Let us here leave Rome and all her traditions and recollections; let us turn from the seven hills whilst the dream is still upon us. With all its sadness and warning, we would not be without it. Happy they who have heard the words "Ecco Roma!" pronounced by their own lips or those of a companion; and hearing, have been privileged to feast with the reverence due to the majesty of age and death, ruin and decay, upon a scene that is matchless: a record of past glories; a silvery stream moving through vast plains, ghost-haunted; hills far-off shutting out the distant, ever-moving sea, a greater emblem of the eternal than Rome itself.

And over all, Heaven's brightest and fairest skies, that, we have already observed, seem to whisper for ever divine words of hope and consolation, of peace and goodwill towards men: bidding them remember that if Paradise was lost to this world, so in like manner it has been regained for that which is to come.



THE LAST THOUGHT.

It's weary lying here,
While my throbbing forehead echoes all the hum of London near,
And oh! my heart is heavy, in this dull and darkened room,
When I think about our village, where the orchards are in bloom—
Our little red-roofed village, where the cherry orchards are—
So far away, so far!

They say that I shall die—
And I'm tired, and life is noisy, and the good days have gone by:
But oh! my red-roofed village—I should die with more content,
Could I see again your gables, and the orchard slopes of Kent,
And the eyes that look out vainly, from a rose-wreathed cottage door,
For one who comes no more.

E. NESBIT.

UNDER THE LINDEN TREE.

A SKETCH.

IT was a fine night, calm and peaceful. The moonlight lay on a fair scene in one sheet of burnished silver: on the distant woods, on the green of the common near, on the fair white villas scattered about: and lastly on a young man and a young girl who were standing by the small gate at the end of a garden under the linden tree.

He was the eldest son of Captain Sefton, who lived with his large family in the large villa farthest off. On the morrow he was going away to seek his fortune, as many young men did then; and he was now bidding adieu to his heart's love, Mary Drummond.

"If you should forget me out there, Edward!" she whispered, with a long-drawn sigh.

"Forget you! That's not a very pleasant thought to part upon!" exclaimed the young man in resentment. "Do you suppose I shall ever see any girl that I love as I love you, Mary?"

"It is so very far away, out there. So far; so far!"

"Or any girl that's half as lovely as you are?" he continued. "Mary, I swear that I'll be true to you!"

"Oh, Edward, I don't doubt you," she breathed between her tears. "Only we shall be so widely separated: you there, and I here: and you may be thrown with other girls and—and it may be *hard* to remember me."

"Mary," said Mr. Sefton, who had a strong objection to sentiment, "why are you bringing this gloomy nonsense in our last moment? Do you wish to put an end to our engagement?"

"You know better. You know that——"

"That all your life's sunshine lies with me. That is what you'd like to say, I suppose, only you *don't* like to say it," he added, with a smile, as he drew her closer to him. "Mary! I wish I could take you with me: but you know, my darling, that cannot be. Only think what a joyful meeting will be ours when I come back again!"

"I shall be thinking of it always," she sighed.

"When I come back a rich man—for I know I shall be successful. Rich, and able to marry. And now let us plight our troth to each other, Mary, more solemnly than we have done it yet. I have brought you this little ring," taking one from his pocket set with pearls, "and I shall take from you the plain gold one you wear on your middle finger."

They exchanged rings. "Will you promise that it shall ever remain there?" he said, as he placed the pearl upon her finger.

"I will. As long as you are true to me."

"And this shall ever remain upon mine." And then, in a few solemn words, they vowed to be true to each other for ever.

He bent to seal the compact on her lips. The church clock, standing on the opposite side of the common, struck half past ten.

"I must be going in, Edward ! I did not think it was so late."

Mrs. Drummond came to the house door, which had been standing open, and called down the path.

"Mary ! My dear, I think you have been out of doors long enough."

"Yes, mamma ; I am coming," she answered.

"Just one moment more, Mrs. Drummond !" implored the young man. "You know it is for years."

A few more minutes, a last lingering embrace, hand pressed to hand and heart to heart, under the silvery moonbeams that flickered upon them through the green leaves of the linden ; and then the last word was spoken and they parted.

Edward Sefton was going to that land of promise, as it was then, to seek his fortune—where so many have found and lost theirs—in the golden plains of California.

Back she turned again and went back to the gate and stood under the shade of the linden to watch him away ; to take another last look at the tall, fine form that was so dear to her. She loved him with an impassioned love ; she had been able to see no fault in him when others had found it, calling him light, unsteady, irreligious : but in this last parting there had lacked something to satisfy her soul. He was going away for long years ; heaven only knew whether they should meet again : and she felt that she would rather have heard some more earnest and even prayerful words from the young man's lips, than the praises of her grace and beauty which he murmured to the last. Had he even said, "God bless you," or "God protect my love," it would have given some sanctity to their parting.

But, no ! To the very last it was, "My loved one, I shall see no face like yours till I come back to you again !"

Almost as if he valued and loved her only for her beauty, she told herself, as she stood there in sorrow and tears.

And then, hating herself for being wicked enough to give way to an unkind thought, she went into the house and up to her own room ; where, before retiring, she said a prayer for the loved one that at least could do him no harm.

The carriage, bearing Edward Sefton to the railway station, passed her house the next morning ; and she, watching from the window, was rewarded by one brief glimpse of the bright, handsome face that was all the world to her. How gay and happy he looked ! And yet he was leaving her behind him !

Still, could she blame him? He was young, ardent, ambitious, and the world was all before him. She had excused him often to others; now she excused him to herself.

Days, and weeks, and months passed, rolling themselves slowly into years. Edward Sefton's letters to Mary, frequent and loving at first, became cool and few and far between. It was understood that he had succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations, and he was amassing rapidly the fortune he had gone out to seek. But he said nothing of coming home to marry.

So Mary waited, hoping against hope that all was right, and keeping her trust and faith in him still, in spite of his repeated long silences and his apparent coldness. And still he came not! In his place many another would gladly have wooed and won the lovely and gentle girl; but her answer was to all alike. Heart and hand were pledged to this "laggard in love," and might not be reclaimed save at his own request.

It came at last! A letter which told her he loved another, and would fain be set free from his early vows. Mary released him in a few cold and quiet words, but never a one of reproach.

And then, for a long time, life and love seemed alike dying within Mary Drummond. She did not become ill; she kept up as before and went quietly about her social duties at home and abroad: but the light of hope had died out of her eyes and the rose-blush of happiness out of her cheeks.

But these blows to the heart of a woman do not kill her. They change the whole current of her life, and wreck for ever the sweet romance of youth; but she rises up from them stronger to do, to work, and, if need be, to suffer. And the time again went on.

There came along one day a truer hero: a staid and stately man of worth and goodness, who had a charming place of his own in the adjoining county, and great wealth to keep it up; and he asked Mary Drummond to be his wife.

She answered Yes. She had known Mr. Falconer for some little time; she liked and respected and esteemed him beyond anyone on earth. Her former infatuation was over; she could not, without great distaste, have married Edward Sefton now, even had he wished it. Five years had gone on since they parted.

"I will marry you, Guy, if you care to take me," she softly whispered to him in answer. "But you know—you know—all about the past."

"The past is over, Mary," he said; "the present remains to us. My love, I will make you happier than he ever could or would have done."

After their marriage, Guy Falconer took his wife to London for a part of the season, engaging a furnished house in one of the squares. There they heard news: Mr. Sefton, a widower now, for

his young wife had lived only a twelvemonth, and very wealthy, had just returned to Europe.

"He is coming to look after you, no doubt, Mary," said Mr. Falconer, with a laugh.

She shook her head sadly, thinking of the past. "Were I not your wife, Guy, were I free as air, he might come fifty times and fifty to that and find that he had to go away again without me. Were there no other man in the world, I could not marry *him*."

Mr. Falconer had guessed rightly. Edward Sefton, knowing nothing of Mary's marriage, had come to seek her. His fickle heart had returned to its early allegiance. Remembering how deep and true had been her love for him, he pictured her as pining still in secret for himself and for what had been.

It was at a ball in London that he met her: for he had halted there for a week or two before travelling down to his early home. He was standing near the entrance door talking with an acquaintance, when his attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of a lady, beautifully attired in white silk and leaning on the arm of a tall, handsome man.

"Why that—that's Miss Drummond!" he broke off. "Surely I cannot be mistaken!"

"Where?" cried his friend, looking about.

"There. On that gentleman's arm. They are speaking now to our hostess."

"That! Oh, that is Mrs. Falconer. Very lovely, is she not? Yes, she was a Miss Drummond. That's her husband."

Mr. Sefton did not speak for some time. "Have they been married long?" he said then.

"Two or three months."

Later in the evening he found it possible to speak to her. She was in the music-room with some ladies. She received him with cool courtesy. He so far forgot himself, he was so mentally bewildered at the unexpected turn events had taken, as to breathe a few words of bitter regret for the past, of what he had come home for and the hopes he had been cherishing. She smiled quietly, betraying no emotion whatever—no apparent remembrance.

"Surely, Mary," he rejoined in his agitation; "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Falconer; surely you have not quite forgotten the past? or our parting under the linden tree?"

"When you vowed to be true for ever and a day," she said lightly. "I doubted it then, if you remember; such vows are often written on the sand."

"But, Mrs. Falconer, you were about to sing to us," spoke up one of the ladies waiting around. "Will you not do so?"

For answer she moved at once to the piano, took off her gloves and sat down. "I will sing you a foolish little song that I have not sung for years," she said. Mr. Sefton, angry yet fascinated, stood

back against the wall, listening for the sweet, rich, harmonious voice that had made one of Mary Drummond's great attractions, and that he had listened to so often in the days gone by.

"Close to my dreaming heart
You stood that day ;
The time of our life had come
To say Yea, or Nay.
I looked long in your face,
As you turned it away ;
If ever Hope lighted my heart,
It died out that day !

"Years long and weary
Have passed since that day ;
Love, Hope and Happiness
Soon faded away.
Your life is your own life,
Go you your own way !
My soul and your soul
Parted that day ! "

"A lovely song—but what strange words !" exclaimed one of the ladies.

She glanced at him again as she concluded. He stood there against the wall, lost in reverie ; the parting under the linden tree that long-past night, and his own folly bitterly present to him.

"Oh, you are here, Mary ! I have been looking for you."

She drew her gloves on, went forward and put her arm within her husband's.

"They are bound up in one another, I can see that ; and I have deserved it all," thought Edward Sefton. "She was a true and loving girl ! no other girl like her in the world. Like many another, I grasped the shadow and lost the substance !"



FORGIVEN.

I DID you once a wrong, O tender friend,
In the old years, before you went away,
And this wrong lies upon me still to-day,
And will be mine, I doubt not, to the end.

Morn brings it, and it wakes with me at night,
Spring buds afresh, and still that wrong breaks forth ;
Or, from the icy chambers of the North,
Winter reveals it still in sterner light.

If shame could kill, then I had died of shame ;
Could strength atone, then I had given my youth ;
And now, years after, there remains the truth—
I wronged my friend—'twill ever be the same.

Yet sometimes, like a glance of sudden sun,
There flashes out an ever new surprise,
In the divine compassion of your eyes :
And then I could not wish the deed undone !

G. B. STUART.

D I V I D E D .

BY KATHERINE CARR.



CHAPTER I.

DENISE.

THE play was just over in a certain small theatre in Paris. The audience had dispersed, some to loiter along in the Boulevards in the cool of an evening late in July, others to retire respectably home to bed, whilst a favoured few did neither, but found their way to the foyer for a laugh and chat with the actors and actresses.

It was the sleepy season in gay Paris ; rank and fashion had long ago dispersed en campagne, or to watering-places at home or abroad ; the Bernhardt was repeating her triumphs in London ; and the theatrical world generally was resting on its oars until the autumn should bring a fresh influx of life and movement into the city.

All this added to the surprise caused by the sudden re-appearance at the Theatre — of Mademoiselle Lenard, who flashed like a meteor upon the stage some two years ago, and since then had lived in absolute retirement in the country with her husband. If this was, indeed, to be her last appearance, why did her uncle, Monsieur Lenard, manager of the Theatre — choose that it should be during this quiet season, instead of in the winter, when tout le monde was in Paris.

She was certainly very pretty, and acted divinely in the not very ambitious rôle of heroine in some tragi-comic drama that did not require very high histrionic powers. Her pathos was unaffected, and therefore touching ; her comedy light and graceful without the faintest shade of vulgarity ; her occasional touches of restrained passion vivid and unconventional, and given a certain force and intensity by the flashing blue eyes and mobile dark eyebrows that had the power of completely altering the expression of her countenance.

Not that her face contained anything more profound than careless amusement as she stood among her young satellites, a smile on her lips and just the faintest suspicion of contempt in her bright, nonchalant eyes. She shone on all alike, singling out none in particular. And, perhaps, in this lay her safety in a not too scrupulous society. There was something, not easily defined, of dignity in her manner that effectually checked any over-familiarity. Her uncle, Monsieur Lenard, watched over her as jealously as a husband ; and she had always avoided following the fashion of her sister actresses of having one special admirer continually dancing attendance on her.

Nevertheless, since women are an envious race, and since Mademoiselle Lenard had the fatal gift of beauty, and of that fascinating charm which acts like a magnet on the opposite sex, several generous female friends lamented that "Denise was such a flirt; really it was a great pity that she was not more circumspect." And it must be owned that now and then some heart-sick young admirer, exasperated by her bewitching eyes and mocking smile, would betray his feelings by a burst of rage, declaring: "Eh bien, oui! I have loved her. That is her fault. But she has no heart. I will have no more to say to her."

Yet, needless to add, Mademoiselle Lenard had only to beckon with her little finger to bring such defaulters quickly to her feet again; and if their pangs caused her more amusement than pity, well! she was but a woman, and a pretty woman into the bargain.

There was, also, a spice of mystery about her, which excited much eager interest and conjecture.

Two years ago she had made her first appearance at the Theatre —. Here her beauty and the freshness of her acting at once secured her popularity; and it was heard, with unanimous regret, shortly after her début, that she was to retire from the stage on her marriage with a young man from the provinces, who disapproved of such a profession for his wife. After that nothing was seen or heard of her for more than a year, when she suddenly again appeared at Monsieur Lenard's theatre in her former rôle, and under her maiden name of Lenard, it being expressly advertised that she would appear for three months only, and positively for the last time.

Of her husband no mention was made, and as he put in no appearance at any time, Mademoiselle Lenard's friends were more than ready to ignore his existence and to take for granted that he was either a villain or a nonentity; under either of which alternatives his young, clever, lovely wife was fully justified in leaving him, whilst she enjoyed life after her own fashion.

From one or two chance allusions, it was assumed that she intended to return to matrimonial duties, fetters, or pleasures—which-ever she considered them—as soon as her present engagement was at an end.

She had been acting now for some three weeks; the house was filled every night; and her uncle was loud in his regrets that she could not resume the profession for good.

"To go and waste herself in some unknown desert en province," he once remarked in an unguarded moment. "To banish herself for the sake of a pig-headed rustic not worthy to black her boots. Bah! It is exasperating. Such a face—such a figure—such a chic about her for the stage!"

"Then he is a lout, this mysterious Monsieur de Kériadec?" asked his companion: one Monsieur le Comte d'Edmond, Mademoiselle Lenard's warmest admirer. "I was beginning to think he

was a myth and nothing else. It is not all quite as it should be, then, in their little arrangements? Incompatibility of temper? Storms in a tea-cup? Or is it something more serious?"

"Nothing—nothing," said Monsieur Lenard hastily. "Nothing, let me assure you, Comte. A mere temporary coolness, which my niece's short absence will, I doubt not, completely cure. As for her—you may take my word for it—a better girl does not exist. A trifle hasty and wild perhaps. But then, what will you have? She is a woman. They are none of them angels, eh, M. le Comte? But, for my part, I hold that those who bark most bite least."

Certainly she did not suffer from home-sickness, or appear desirous of Monsieur de Kériadec's company. She was as bright and merry as in her girlhood, with a smile and a laugh for all, and as eager about her professional duties as ever.

"What a pity there is a Monsieur de Kériadec in the background," was the thought of many. "Que c'est bête, that a bird of such gay plumage should be in the possession of some dull, sober-tinted, heavy-witted bourgeois."

None considered the possibility of this same bourgeois revelling in the beauty of the lovely bird that, somehow or other, he had lured into his clumsy grasp; or for one moment thought it likely that it might be Madame de Kériadec who was to blame, if there were differences between herself and her husband.

Whatever may have been her private faults or troubles, Madame de Kériadec showed a brave front to the world, with a kind of insouciant defiance that repelled any attempt at pity or sympathy from those who wished to win her friendship; and yet, at the same time, always conducting herself with a simple dignity that kept people at a proper distance, and seemed to place her in a little world of her own, apart from her companions.

However, she was not without detractors. Her beauty and popularity roused a good deal of jealous criticism. No doubt there were certain ladies who would have hailed the arrival of Monsieur de Kériadec with malicious gratification, especially if he were a person calculated to put his wife to open shame.

On the night that this story opens, Mademoiselle Clothilde, an actress performing in the same piece as Mademoiselle Lenard, and Madame de Fréville, a so-called friend of Denise, felt particularly annoyed by her popularity. In the centre of the room, surrounded by a circle of admirers, chiefly fatuous-countenanced young men with susceptible hearts, who thought they were doing the right thing, stood Mademoiselle Lenard, listening to their inane compliments with that half-mocking smile of hers. All the most desirable young men were at her feet; even de Caromont, Mademoiselle Clothilde's newest swain, had deserted over to her side; and as for Monsieur le Comte d'Edmond, he was making himself a perfect fool over her.

"She will encourage Monsieur le Comte, voyez vous," Mademoiselle

Clothilde muttered spitefully. "The others are mere boys, and not good enough for my fine madame. But now that there is a rich man of good family dancing attendance on her, we shall see where all her boasted virtue goes to."

"As for her beauty, it is all flash," rejoined Madame de Fréville critically. "It will not last."

"She is too tall for my taste," added a young dandy of nineteen. He imagined himself madly in love with Mademoiselle Clothilde, who, when artfully concealed under paint and feathers, might with some strength of imagination have been put down as no more than twenty years his senior, and he was ready enough to disparage Venus herself if it would please the lady of his affections.

"She has the temper of a virago," continued Mademoiselle Clothilde. "For my part, I do not wonder that her husband could not put up with her. These women are angels to the world, but in the domestic circle—pouf!—they upset everything, with their passions and rages. I commiserate Monsieur de Kériadec from my heart!"

Evidently this opinion was not shared by Comte d'Edmond. He was a thorough man of the world, who could be agreeable enough when he chose; but was too well used to flattery, and a shallow popularity, to think it worth while to exert himself to please anyone but himself. However, blasé as he was, Mademoiselle Lenard interested him more than most women did; chiefly because she treated him with the same careless disdain that she vouchsafed her other admirers; and because a virtuous woman, in society or out of it, was to him an enigma which rarely crossed his path.

Having a good deal of tact and diplomacy in his dealings with the fair sex, he soon discerned the weak spots in Mademoiselle Lenard's character.

She was young, impulsive and, thanks to the care of her uncle and aunt, peculiarly ignorant of life. Anyone who treated her with fatherly frankness, apparently without any ulterior motive of love-making, easily won her confidence; and Comte d'Edmond had managed to put himself upon the comfortable footing of friend and adviser, with just enough of deferential admiration to appeal to the womanly vanity which d'Edmond knew so well how to indulge, without any appearance of doing so.

This was the hero whose attention to Mademoiselle Lenard caused Madame de Fréville and Mademoiselle Clothilde such heart-burnings. He was a brilliant conversationalist; and the brisk volley of repartee that was flying between him and Mademoiselle Lenard kept around them a group of amused young men, who stirred them on by a laugh or a joke to fresh efforts whenever the conversation threatened to flag.

Mademoiselle Lenard was coming off victorious—perhaps d'Edmond allowed her the advantage because he liked to see her face and eyes glow with eager triumph—and some sally of hers had

just excited a roar of laughter and "Bravas," when a sudden commotion and the sound of angry voices in loud altercation arrested everyone's attention.

"What an uproar!" exclaimed d'Edmond. "Who is it? Evidently some one whose excitement is too much for him. I wish he would finish his cup elsewhere, instead of forcing his hilarity into the midst of our respectable society. Hold! What is that he is saying? Mademoiselle Lenard—your attention."

As the voices drew near, it was easy to recognise in one of them the fat and sonorous tones of the manager, Monsieur Lenard, speaking in an expostulatory if not imploring manner to some stranger who was either not himself or in a towering passion.

The names of Mademoiselle Lenard and Madame de Kériadec were plainly audible in the discussion. In fact the intruder went farther than that, and in his increasing excitement used the more familiar title of Denise, which everyone knew to be Mademoiselle Lenard's Christian name.

"Some adorer driven to frenzy," laughed d'Edmond. "You must go and pacify him, mademoiselle."

"Nonsense! Why do they not send him away? What can he want? I wish my uncle to take me home, but how can he do so before he is rid of the noisy interloper?" she replied carelessly. But she looked uneasy, and her laugh was forced and nervous.

Madame de Fréville and Mademoiselle Clothilde had drawn near, and were glancing alternately at her and at the door. They felt instinctively, with secret satisfaction, that Mademoiselle Lenard was on the verge of a mauvais quart d'heure.

By this time Monsieur Lenard had been driven, step by step, into the green-room. He was a short, fat little man, with a tightly-screwed black moustache, which gave an air of ferocity to an otherwise passive and good-humoured countenance; and as he retreated backwards in undignified trepidation, shaking his plump fist in impotent wrath at the young man who was forcing him along, the effect was so ludicrous that it provoked a burst of hilarity from the easily-amused company of the foyer.

"Hercules vanquishing a pigmy. The game is not fair," mocked d'Edmond. "Au secours!"

Mademoiselle Lenard joined in the laugh; but it died quickly on her lips, giving place to a look of mingled anger, misery and astonishment, whilst her face, proud and defiant, turned as white as a sheet.

The cause of this uproar was a young man, so tall and broad-shouldered that with one hand he could have sent any of the dandies before him headlong out of the room. He was dressed in the roughest of provincial garbs—corduroy breeches and long boots stained with mud, a loose old felt hat on his head, and a heavy riding-whip in his hand. His face was red with anger, his blue eyes ablaze,

and his whole appearance suggestive of a choleric, head-strong young farmer. He did not look more than twenty-one; but there were lines about the mouth and forehead indicative of an iron-will and strength of purpose well matched with his great physical strength.

As he forced his way into the green-room he was exclaiming incoherently:

"She is my wife, I say. I will have her, if I have to kick you out of your own house first. Where is she? What the devil do you mean by hiding her from me?"

"Have patience. Only have patience," gasped poor Monsieur Lenard. "If you would but listen to reason, instead of making all this esclandre! Give me but five, ten minutes' private interview, my good Raoul, and I will tell you what you choose. But do not be indiscreet—I entreat of you, do not be indiscreet."

"Dame! It is for you to talk of indiscretion. I want my wife, I repeat," thundered the young man, steadily advancing, whilst fat little Monsieur Lenard slowly retreated, casting nervous glances at the stranger's formidable riding-whip. He looked quite capable of laying it across the shoulders of anyone who interfered with him, even should they be the important ones of the manager himself.

Some of the men, amongst them d'Edmond and de Caromont, thrust themselves forward, prepared to lend their assistance in expelling the intruder should the scene last much longer; but they were secretly relieved when Monsieur Lenard waved them back with uplifted hands and a hurried:

"Doucement! Doucement! Do not defy him!"

"Is he an escaped lunatic?" cried Mademoiselle Clothilde. "Would it not be safer to take him into custody?"

Denise Lenard was leaning heavily on the back of the chair, her fingers interlaced with a tension that drove the blood from them. She was looking straight towards the young man, her head thrown back, and a whole world of proud defiance in her beautiful face. D'Edmond, looking at her, began to guess the state of affairs and moved in front of her, as though to protect her from danger and insult.

"It would be wiser for you to restrain yourself," he said, addressing the stranger with insolent menace.

"Sacré tonnerre!" said the young man passionately, thrusting him aside with no more ceremony than if he had been a dog. "I will settle my account with you or anyone else, if you will wait. If you want my name, messieurs, here it is—Raoul de Kériadec—I am not ashamed of it. It was known before the name of Lenard was registered."

"Known at the village market," said De Caromont, sotto voce.

"Come, my good fellow, calm yourself," put in d'Edmond, with contemptuous patronage. "No one talks about fighting. But, at least, behave yourself like a gentleman."

"Diable !" burst out the young man, glaring at him for a moment in a manner that made d'Edmond devoutly thankful that he was not alone with him at the mercy of that clumsy whip and powerful arm. "Who are *you*, to interfere?"

"Her husband !" whispered Mademoiselle Clothilde ecstatically. "What a *dénouement* ! Bourgeois from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. And a temper ! Ah ! I would not be in her shoes for a king's ransom."

Poor Mademoiselle Lenard ! It was a humiliating position for her ; more so than any of them could realise. She was painfully alive to mockery ; and who would not be inclined to laugh at her unwelcome husband, with his extravagant, boyish anger and farmer-like roughness of costume ? How those other women would rejoice at her discomfiture !

For a moment her face worked as though she would cry from pure distress. But second thoughts quickly banished any idea of such weakness, and, holding her head very high in the air, she extended the tips of her fingers to the new-comer, saying carelessly :

"What, Raoul, is it you ? You have a startling way of making your appearance. Quite a fine stage effect. We thought it was the nearest cabaret let loose, until we caught sight of your figure," and she glanced at his muddy boots ; "and then we, for a moment, imagined ourselves on a tour en province, where farmers come to the theatre straight from tilling the soil. Since you are here, *mon ami*, welcome."

"You *will* be en province this time to-morrow," rejoined the young man hotly. "I have come to fetch you."

He did not take his wife's proffered hand, and her last words only deepened the stern defiance in his boyish face. He looked like a tiger brought to bay—overcome by numbers, but determined to make a good fight, and conscious that his right as Madame de Kériadec's husband gave him an irresistible weapon. Yet as he stood there—big, clumsy, wrathful—there was an expression in his eyes, when he looked at his wife's pretty, rebellious face, that was not entirely anger. It was rather the passion of yearning tenderness that, being thrust back upon itself, had no other outlet for its pent-up emotion than fierce rage and bitterness.

"The big fool loves her to distraction, in spite of it all," Madame de Fréville whispered to de Caromont. "And how she hates him—the ugly peasant. This is a pretty finale to Mademoiselle Lenard's triumph ; to retire to the country, as plain Madame de Kériadec, under the great thumb of a plough-boy."

But this was evidently what the "plough-boy" intended to happen ; and, seeing that the most dignified way of ending the scene was to follow him without further remonstrance, Mademoiselle Lenard, or, more correctly, Madame de Kériadec, submitted to follow her husband out of the room.

"Pacify him. Do not let him deprive us of you," said d'Edmond, as she gave him her hand in passing. "May I come and see you to-morrow, to hear the result of this little drama?"

Raoul de Kériadec said nothing, but probably he overheard the remark, for he cast a withering glance upon Monsieur le Comte, that said as plainly as language: "WILL you?"

Then he drew Madame de Kériadec towards the door, like a gendarme in charge of a culprit, and together they left the theatre, followed by Monsieur Lenard, gesticulating wildly and declaring volubly in defence of himself and of his niece.

"It was merely a little freak. Nothing serious was intended. Monsieur de Kériadec should really listen to reason. He had looked after that dear little Denise as he would have looked after his own daughter. She had lived with him as in former days—Madame Lenard had guarded her from all disrespect, all familiarity; and he, her poor innocent uncle, had always been by her side at the theatre. After all, where was the crime? Monsieur de Kériadec had given her her congé and gone off to amuse himself in his way; why, then, should not the child also amuse herself in her way? She was as good as gold—no one could accuse her of any levity. He had done his best for her. And he implored monsieur not to be too severe on a mere harmless escapade."

"Oh, taisez-vous," exclaimed Raoul irritably. "Good? Of course she is good. Who would dare hint that she was not? Come, Denise, a fiacre is waiting for us, and I am going to take you back to Monsieur Lenard's house for the night. But to-morrow morning I shall take you home by the 10.15 train. Monsieur Lenard and I will arrange matters between us."

Denise shrugged her shoulders, made a little moue at him behind his back, but knew that it was useless to object. She was aware, by experience, that it was sheer waste of energy to combat her husband's will when once he had made up his mind on any point.

He helped her into the fiacre, ordered the driver to take them to No. 4, Rue du B——, then took his place, not by his wife's side but on the opposite seat, whence if he chose he could see her face and movements.

Denise drew back as far as she could, that the shadow of the corner might hide her from him as much as possible. Tears of mortification were trickling down her cheeks and she was determined he should not see them.

Neither of them spoke for a few minutes. Then Raoul broke the silence.

"Why did you do it, Denise? It was unfair. I thought I could trust you; and I find that I cannot. It was very cruel of you, when you know ——"

"I meant no harm," she answered, conscious that she could offer no good excuse for her behaviour. "Only I could not stay shut up

for ever and ever at that triste Camper. It was your doing, for giving me so little liberty—it drove me distracted. And, now, to make such a scene! I dare say I was wrong—foolish. But why did you not write to me; or at least have waited until to-morrow morning?”

“I was in a rage. I hardly knew what I was doing,” said the young man humbly. “I have only just arrived in Paris and I did not stop to think. I regret it; I acted like a fool, as usual.”

As a matter of fact, he was thoroughly in the right and Denise much to blame. But as she was a beautiful and wilful young woman who cared absolutely nothing for her husband, whereas he was clumsy and uninteresting and very much in love with his wife, it was easy enough for her to reverse the positions and make him appear to be the offender.

His half-apologetic tone encouraged her to ask a question that had been burning on her lips.

“You do not really mean what you said about taking me back to Camper to-morrow?”

“Yes. Absolutely.”

“But my uncle—my engagement! Impossible! I tell you it is impossible, Raoul,” she cried in consternation.

“It is nothing to me what happens to your uncle and your engagement,” he answered. “The one is a blundering idiot; the other had no right ever to be made. I will settle them both.”

“You cannot mean it,” said poor Denise, in genuine distress. “Only conceive what a position you will put me in. My uncle will never consent to it. I will never consent to it.”

“Yes, you will. And monsieur, your uncle, too—this very night even. Money will pacify *him*; do not be afraid. I daresay it is not so impossible to replace you as you seem to imagine.”

“I *do* dislike you,” cried Denise. “I wish with my whole heart that I had never married you.”

“I know that,” he answered quietly. “You have done your best to let me know it—and to make me wish it too.”

His face was white, his voice shaken with anger; but not, as she imagined, so much anger with her as with the miserable fate that made him so repugnant to her and the pain of his yearning to be loved as he loved her.

They were both very young; both cursed with quick tempers; both unhappy in their married life. There were all the elements of a matrimonial rupture.

They spoke no more until the fiacre drew up before No. 4, Rue du B—. Then, before he opened the door, Raoul made a last attempt at reconciliation.

“Ma bien aimée,” he said wistfully, “do not be angry with me. Wait until we have talked it over calmly. You know, tout comprendre c’est tout pardonner. Will you kiss me?”

“You may kiss me,” said Denise resignedly, after a slight hesita-

tion, lifting up to him the side of her cheek so that he could, if he wished, kiss her on the ear.

Not being used to more demonstrative embraces, Raoul made the best of it; and, without another word or reproach, saw her safely into the house. There was a light burning in Monsieur Lenard's private room, so he sat patiently there, awaiting to hear that fussy little gentleman's view of things and to give him his own opinion on the subject.

Denise nodded "good-night," then rushed up to her own room, where she tried to expend some of her indignation by pacing up and down like a caged lion.

CHAPTER II.

A VERY YOUNG COUPLE.

IF we recollect the unnatural system of marriage which is still almost universal in France, we shall not feel unmixed surprise at the strained relations between Monsieur and Madame de Kériadec. On the whole, they compared favourably with the majority of French married couples, for there was love at least on one side; and on both, sincerity and a singularly high sense of honour.

Denise Lenard was an orphan. Since the age of fourteen, when her parents died, she had been brought up by her uncle, Monsieur Gustave Lenard, and his wife; who, having no children of their own, were delighted to adopt her as their daughter, and were as devotedly indulgent to her as the most doting father and mother could have been.

Monsieur Gustave Lenard was manager of a little theatre which, in what was a respectable way for Paris, was rather popular on account of the lightness—tempered with just enough excitement and tragic emotion—of its performances. They were always well acted and well put on the stage, and, if they did not aspire very high, at least they avoided too decided a licence of vulgarity.

It had always been an understood thing that, under the auspices of Monsieur Lenard, Denise should go upon the stage when she was seventeen or eighteen, and she had been brought up and educated with this end always in view. Her father having died in poverty, left her dependent on her own exertions; and as she was pretty and clever, both nature and circumstances seemed to point to the profession of an actress as her vocation in life.

Madame Lenard, her aunt, did not quite adopt this view. She was too fond of the girl to approve of her entering into any profession, especially one so full of pitfalls as the stage. But Monsieur Lenard over-ruled her; and when Denise was seventeen she made her first appearance in public, in some simple rôle suited to her particular style of talent. She had been well trained, had a certain

amount of ability that, if not actual genius, had at least a charm of its own ; and she was decidedly beautiful, so that without much difficulty she obtained an instantaneous success. Monsieur Lenard thought he had made a good speculation when he adopted his niece, and predicted such future fame for her that it is little wonder Denise grew up a thoroughly spoilt child, expecting her own way in everything and prepared to see the world fall down in worship at her feet.

Yet, with it all, one loved Denise. Her ways, wilful though they were, were such pretty, loveable ways ; her calm acceptance of homage as though it was her right was so frank and girlish, and so absolutely devoid of affectation and conceit.

She owed much to Madame Lenard, a good-hearted, sensible woman ; who, though sometimes just a little amiably blind to Denise's faults, did her best to foster the girl's higher qualities and taught her to have a supreme contempt for the flattery of the world. It was impossible to avoid letting her come more or less into contact with a certain amount of unprincipled frivolity and vulgar vice ; but, in so far as it was possible, Madame Lenard—and to do him justice, Monsieur Lenard also—guarded her zealously from the dangers of the Parisian world, especially the Parisian theatrical world.

Thus, thanks partly to them, but chiefly to her own good heart and an innate nobility of character, Denise grew up innocent, though not ignorant, of evil ; and a gay-spirited, fascinating young creature who was the very light of Monsieur and Madame Lenard's old age. They could deny her nothing ; and, in their blind fondness, did not perceive that she was very wilful and headstrong, with a quick temper that might some day lead her into trouble.

According to the usual custom in France, Denise's future husband had been selected for her by her parents long before she was in her teens. The young man thus honoured was the only son of the late Monsieur Lenard's greatest friend, one Monsieur de Kériadec, a well-to-do proprietor in Brittany. This boy, a great shy hobbledehoy, used to pay a short visit every few years to the Lenards in Paris, in order that the two young people should grow up in friendly familiarity, and when older fall in love with each other, as it was their duty to do.

When Denise had reached her sixteenth year, these visits ceased for a time. So far there was no sign of love on either side. Raoul was shy and retiring, caring but little for woman's society ; and Denise looked upon him with the patronising indifference of a lively girl for an untidy and commonplace youth. They did not meet again for nearly two years, when Denise was turned seventeen, and just making her *début* on the stage. And then Madame Lenard suddenly took fright at the girl's beauty and popularity—declared that she could never bear to see her an actress, and suggested to her husband that young de Kériadec should be summoned and consulted as

to the advisability of adhering to the plan mapped out by his own and Denise's parents.

"Let Denise marry that country bumpkin at the very outset of what was going to be a career of unexampled success!" exclaimed Monsieur Lenard. "Never! The idea of letting a couple of babies like that marry. No. If Raoul wanted her, let him come and find her."

And, oddly enough, considering that he had never seemed to pay her any attention, Monsieur Raoul de Kériadec did want her. One day, quite by chance, he happened to read the theatrical news in one of the Parisian journals, in which Mademoiselle Lenard's beauty and talent were extolled in terms of extravagant praise, and Monsieur Lenard's theatre mentioned as the new fashionable resort of the gilded youth of Paris.

As he read, Raoul's blood was fired with unaccountable anger. Denise, the load-star of Parisian dandies, the newest rage, the observed of all observers, and her name bandied about with any other actress at the clubs and in the newspapers. The idea was intolerable! He had never thought about marriage, or even of being in love. But, five minutes after he read that notice in the journal, he had made up his mind that he would marry Denise Lenard and rescue her from a malicious and insidious world. For Raoul was home-bred and country-bred; to his simple mind any association with the stage must have a deadly effect on the morals; and if Denise was ever to be his wife it should be before the poison had so much as touched her.

He went, bigger and stronger than ever—terribly out of place in Paris, where the fashionable young men made him look almost uncouthly powerful by contrast with them—but with a fearless honesty and strength of purpose in his every word, look and deed, that won its way straight to Madame Lenard's heart.

Denise was very charming and friendly, but a trifle scornful at what she considered his provincial manners; not yet being capable of discerning that what made him appear so rough and brusque was, in reality, only his uncompromising sincerity amongst a flattering and contemptible society.

As for Raoul, he fell head over ears in love with Denise before the end of a week, and at the close of a fortnight proposed formally for her hand. Perhaps it would have been more diplomatic to woo her longer, with "sweet observances" and lover-like advances. But Raoul was too straightforward himself to understand the intricacies of a woman's mind; and since he loved her, went straight to the point and asked her to be his wife.

Denise, slightly taken aback at such precipitancy, demurred, said she did not know him well enough, that she was fond of her profession and had no wish to marry. Madame Lenard urgently pressed her to accept his suit; and even Monsieur Lenard smothered his own feelings enough to refrain from influencing her against the marriage; which was a real act of self-denial, for he took the utmost

pride in her success, and looked forward to wonderful triumphs in the future. But he was fond enough of her to be unselfish, and honestly desired her welfare more than his own gratification ; and, when his wife impressed upon him the perils that would beset the girl, with her youth and loveliness, should anything happen to themselves, he consented to encourage young de Kériadec to the best of his abilities.

On the other hand they used no coercion, except by what is indeed forcible enough—disinterested, loving advice.

Whether it was this or some more potent reason that induced Denise to yield, it is hard to tell. But she did yield ; and the world in general, shrugging its shoulders, wondered what inducements Raoul had used to enable him to overcome so proud and self-willed a young woman. However, those who knew him intimately, said it was a foregone conclusion, for anyone who had ever attempted to resist his will remembered that the endeavour had been an egregious failure. When once he set his heart on anything, he had a quiet, irresistible power of subduing and mastering whoever ventured to oppose him ; and over women this magnetic force of energy has often a curious attractiveness which they are quite unable to account for.

Denise was not in love with him ; she did not pretend to be so. Like many women, she needed trouble and a *mental* awakening to give her the capacity for loving any man. At present she was youthful, egotistical, labouring under the pleasant illusion that so long as she was passively good, comfortably provided with this world's luxuries and cared for by her friends, she was sure to be happy. She had no enemies, had the reputation of being warm-hearted and generous, and meant to be an excellent wife to her husband.

But of love, and the self-effacement of love, she was as ignorant as a child of five.

It was with this character, an unformed one full of promise, but of promise only, that Denise Lenard became Denise de Kériadec, and was taken by a young and inexperienced husband to his home in an out-of-the-way part of the country, far from Paris and its gaieties.

This, to begin with, bred disagreement. As Raoul was in love with her, Denise expected him to be subservient to every wish she expressed ; and when she discovered that he was resolute in his intention of keeping her at Camper, without spending even part of the year in Paris, she was at first consternated, then childishly indignant at her lover's presumption in thwarting her. She had lived all her life in Paris, and loved her native city and its pleasures as only a Parisian can do. The country was monotonous and lonely ; the scenery, beautiful as it was, did not interest her. She appreciated, not sea and woods and meadows, but Parisian Boulevards, the Rue de Rivoli with its gorgeous shop windows, and the Bois, where there was always plenty of life and fashion.

Raoul, on the contrary, was a true son of the soil and of the waves, born and bred amongst his peasantry and revelling in country pursuits and the wild, free beauty of nature. The six weeks he had spent in Paris, between his courtship of Denise and their marriage, had opened his eyes to a state of society that, to his unsophisticated mind and simple code of honour, was simply revolting. If he had any acknowledged ideal, it was that his wife should be pre-eminently *sans reproche*; alas, like many men, it was his private conviction that women, at best, are such weak creatures, that their only safeguard is to flee from temptation—never to fight it; and it was not at all part of his scheme that Denise should run even the risk of contamination by living amongst and making friends with people whom her husband considered unfit to touch her hand.

As for letting her continue on the stage, it can be imagined, knowing his views, how immovable he was on that point.

Denise looked on the surface of life. Raoul, if slower to take things in at first, penetrated deeper in the end, and recognised the plague-spot that was spreading its contagious moral disease throughout the society of "the fairest town in Europe."

But there were more practical reasons for Raoul's refusal to live in Paris than the mere puritanical objections of a jealous young husband.

He could not afford it. It was not his fault if the Lenards had imagined him to be a richer man than he was. As a matter of fact, it was as much as he could do to keep up the old family home at Camper in anything like proper order, without the extra expense of a house or apartments in Paris.

All this Denise could not understand. The value of money was as Greek to her, and possibly Raoul's moral objections were little less so. She did not see that his apparent austerity arose simply from his intense love and respect for her pure womanhood, his determination to guard her zealously, as one would guard some priceless treasure. And he, on his part, could form no conception of the Parisian girl's dreary loneliness in his far-away Breton home.

She hated it, poor Denise, during those first months of married life. It was winter, a bad season for making acquaintance with a country, much less a seaside life; and whatever there might be of grand or beautiful in the effects of storm and wind was quite eclipsed, in her opinion, by the discomfort. The wild, monotonous surge of the waves filled her with melancholy, and there was a kind of uncouth horror in the rush of the wind through the trees that gave her a physical feeling of unreasonable fear.

The château itself, with its scanty, old-fashioned furniture, was cold and unhome-like. With money it might have been made charmingly snug and picturesque; but there was no money, and Denise's little knick-knacks and wedding presents covered but a small part of the numerous empty rooms.

"We will make it more ship-shape by degrees," Raoul had said, when first he brought home his bride. "Meantime, Denise, you must tell me what you would like done, just as it strikes you; and though you may have to wait a little, it all shall be done some day."

As for companionship, Madame de Kériadec soon discovered that such society as might be obtained in the neighbourhood was so absolutely uncongenial to her as to be worse than none. About four miles off was the little primitive town of Andierne, where Denise went to church on Sundays, and after service had to speak a few polite words to Monsieur le Maire and other respectable residents of Andierne. Denise, though she might be bored by her provincial neighbours, was by far too friendly and kind-hearted to show it; but these good people of Andierne, with their narrow-minded pruderies and self-satisfied ignorance of the world were not encouraging. They could not forget that Madame de Kériadec had been an actress—"only for a few months, it is true," said Mademoiselle Mathilde. "Mais——!" and that unfinished sentence contained all manner of vague insinuations that continued to rankle in the provincial mind, to whom Mademoiselle Mathilde, who had been three times to Paris in the course of her forty years, was an unquestioned authority. She was Denise's nearest neighbour, and from the first she had looked askance at young Madame de Kériadec. Did not the latter come to church dressed out in the daintiest of tight-fitting Parisian costumes, wearing shoes with the most perilously high heels and pointed toes, and hats that were more suited to gay Boulevards than to a sober country parish? Mademoiselle Mathilde glared at these tokens of vanity from under her severe black bonnet and veil with a feeling of righteous satisfaction in the shapeless simplicity of her own waistless jacket and flat-soled, elastic-side, boots; and every turn of Denise's pretty head, every one of the quick, girlish movements, was described as stage trickery and affectation.

"Pretty, you say!" she would remark with a sniff. "Yes, a dressed up doll. Do you not find that she is very *maniéré*, this Parisian actress?"

However, up to a certain period, the most malicious tongues could not find a breath of scandal connected with the new Châtelaine of Camper, and public opinion began to veer round in her favour. But by this time Denise, who, though ignorant of the cause, had some perception of the coolness of her neighbours, had given up trying to make herself pleasant to ungracious strangers who, at their best, could afford her neither amusement nor interest; and it became evident to her that it was at Camper itself that she must look for distraction.

As for her dainty trousseau, that was completely wasted in a district where her dear little high-heeled shoes and lace-trimmed skirts were ruined after one walk in the muddy lanes, or over the sands and rocks by the sea; and where all the women wore coifs and aprons and sabots!

After a time she gave up walking and tried to amuse herself indoors with her books, fancy work, or music. But they soon palled. Want of wholesome exercise gave her the migraine, which, in turn, made her cross and irritable. This was also partly owing to want of work. Her profession had hitherto kept her busy day and night; and, to a healthy nature accustomed to the happy distractions of industry, it is always a trial to be suddenly thrown into indolence, with no definite object to live and work for. Denise had not yet discovered that there was plenty of scope for her energies in her new home if she chose to look for it.

She had married to amuse herself. Indeed, was not that the aim and object of matrimony? To wear pretty dresses; to do what one liked all day; to be made much of in Society? So, at least, her young married friends had taught her to believe. But then, possibly, their husbands also were fond of liberty, and held different views on the subject from the old-fashioned ones of Raoul.

He was unfashionable enough to be very much in love with his wife. But he did not understand women; their inconsistencies bewildered him. More especially was it a mystery to him why any girl, unless forced to do so by her parents, should marry a man with whom she was not in love; and, as a natural consequence of this mistake, he expected Denise to return at least part of the affection he gave to her.

The first time he realised her indifference to him and saw that his love and proffered sympathy only bothered her, he shut up like a knife, hurt and wounded and profoundly miserable, because *she* was miserable.

Once she begged him, if he would not make Paris his home whether he would consent to spend a month or two there every winter, that she might see her friends and have a little gaiety. He did not answer the request at once; but was very absent-minded and thoughtful for several days.

Then he had to confess that, though he had been calculating how to defray the extra expense, he did not think the plan practicable—at all events for the present.

"We cannot afford it just now," he said. "I wish we could. You thought I was rich, Denise. I did not know that, or I would have warned you that it was a mistake on your part. There are debts to pay; you know my father ran through a great part of his fortune. It seems to me a point of honour to pay them off. It means so much, going to Paris. I regret it for your sake, *ma bien aimée*, but it cannot be this year. Perhaps a little later on. You believe that I am sorry, Denise?"

"Then am I to stay here for ever and ever, and never see my friends and Paris again? Stay here from year's end to year's end?" she cried, tears of disappointment rising to her eyes.

"Is it then so very dreadful for you?"

"Sometimes I cannot bear it—the loneliness—the ennui. One might as well be fifty, and settled down to die, here, in this wilderness."

"We ought not to be so lonely—not when we are together," said Raoul wistfully. "If you cared for me as I care for you, all would be well. I cannot help being poor, Denise. I would give my right hand to help you; you know it. What can I do?"

"I do not know. Eh bien—yes! Be more frivolous, more impetuous. I am frivolous, and I like to see everyone else the same. You know, *mon mari*, that when young people first marry they are expected to go out into the world and amuse themselves. That is what I wish to do; to see something of life, of experience."

"Ah! yes. And how does it end with those couples that marry *to amuse themselves*? You do not understand. It is just what I dread for you. If I did not love you, Denise, I should not care."

"I am very bad to you, Raoul. I am often ashamed of myself," she said, with sudden compunction. "You must forgive me. It is because I have so shocking a temper. But I will try and be more worthy of you if you will have patience with me."

She did try. But she was young, thoughtless and hot-blooded. Raoul, too, was young and hot-blooded. But instead of being thoughtless he was serious, and difficult to move when once he had formed an opinion. He saw that Denise was unhappy; and the consciousness that it was his doing that she was so made him seem cold and reserved when, in reality, he was longing to lavish a world of devotion upon her.

For we have drawn the darker side of Denise's character—purposely, to account for what follows. But there *was* a bright side, and, to her friends, it was the most visible side.

Where it lay, or in what it consisted, no one knew precisely.

But, with all her faults, if once she chose to do so, with or without your will, she fascinated you. A good many women have this gift, a dangerous one sometimes for themselves and for their friends. In Denise the charm lay partly in a fearless honesty and naïveté, partly in the unaffected and natural fascinations with which nature had endowed her. Her very tempers were those of a spoilt and unreasonable child. But you felt that, hidden somewhere in her soul, lay something deep and rare, which would be very precious to the person who was clever enough to find it.

Raoul knew that it was there, but could not unearth it however hard he sought. And this failure, where he most wished for success, maddened and tortured him until, from very excess of love unrequited, his manner became fierce and brusque, stirring up a natural indignation in the girl who had never before been chidden or thwarted.

Thus, little by little, the de Kériadecs drifted farther and farther apart, until they were merely civil to each other and life became a

miserable routine to them both. Young people are so much more unhappy *because* they are unhappy than older ones, who have given up expecting to find any perfection in the world. Denise was provoked with Raoul for his tiresome wish to marry her when they were so unsuited. Why had he not found a good, dull little girl from Guimpe? And Raoul—who, strange to say, preferred his beautiful, wilful wife to any “good, dull little girl” in the world—grew bitter and desperate, suffering double what Denise suffered, because he had the keenest of pains to endure—unrequited love—of which she knew nothing.

It went on like this for a year. When the second winter drew near, Denise moped more than ever; quarrels and bitter words became frequent, until things seemed unbearable.

Then Raoul suggested a change. He had some property near Rouen which wanted seeing after. His uncle, Monsieur de St. Huriel, lived in that neighbourhood, and Raoul knew that he was always welcome to stay as long as he liked with the St. Huriels, with whom he had been intimate since childhood. He arranged to pay them a visit of two or three months, whilst he transacted what might be a lengthy business, and he had a faint hope that the change would benefit Denise.

“And I?” she asked, when he unfolded his plans to her, her eyes brightening with expectation. “Where shall I go, meantime?”

“You—since you are wretched with me—may, of course, go where you please. I had hoped you would have come with me. But if it seems dull to you, so it. I shall be there during July, August and September. I suppose you will wish to spend the—holiday—with your Uncle and Aunt Lenard in Paris?”

“Yes. I know they will be glad to have me. Oh, Raoul, what a treat you have given me!”

For the next few days Denise was peculiarly pensive and quiet, with now and then a mischievous gleam in her eyes that ought to have roused her husband’s suspicions. She was wild and reckless, but not ill-intentioned. And it was chiefly from a delight in adventure and excitement that she wrote to Monsieur Lenard, suggesting that for those three months she should appear again at his theatre in her former rôle and under her maiden name.

“Raoul has his ideas,” she concluded; “but, dear, good old uncle, spoil me just this once and make me happy and keep my secret.”

That Monsieur Lenard aided and abetted in this mad-cap scene we are aware. We have also seen that Monsieur de Kériadec suddenly discovered the plot, and appeared, like a true spoil-sport upon the scene of action.

(To be continued.)

TWO MEETINGS.

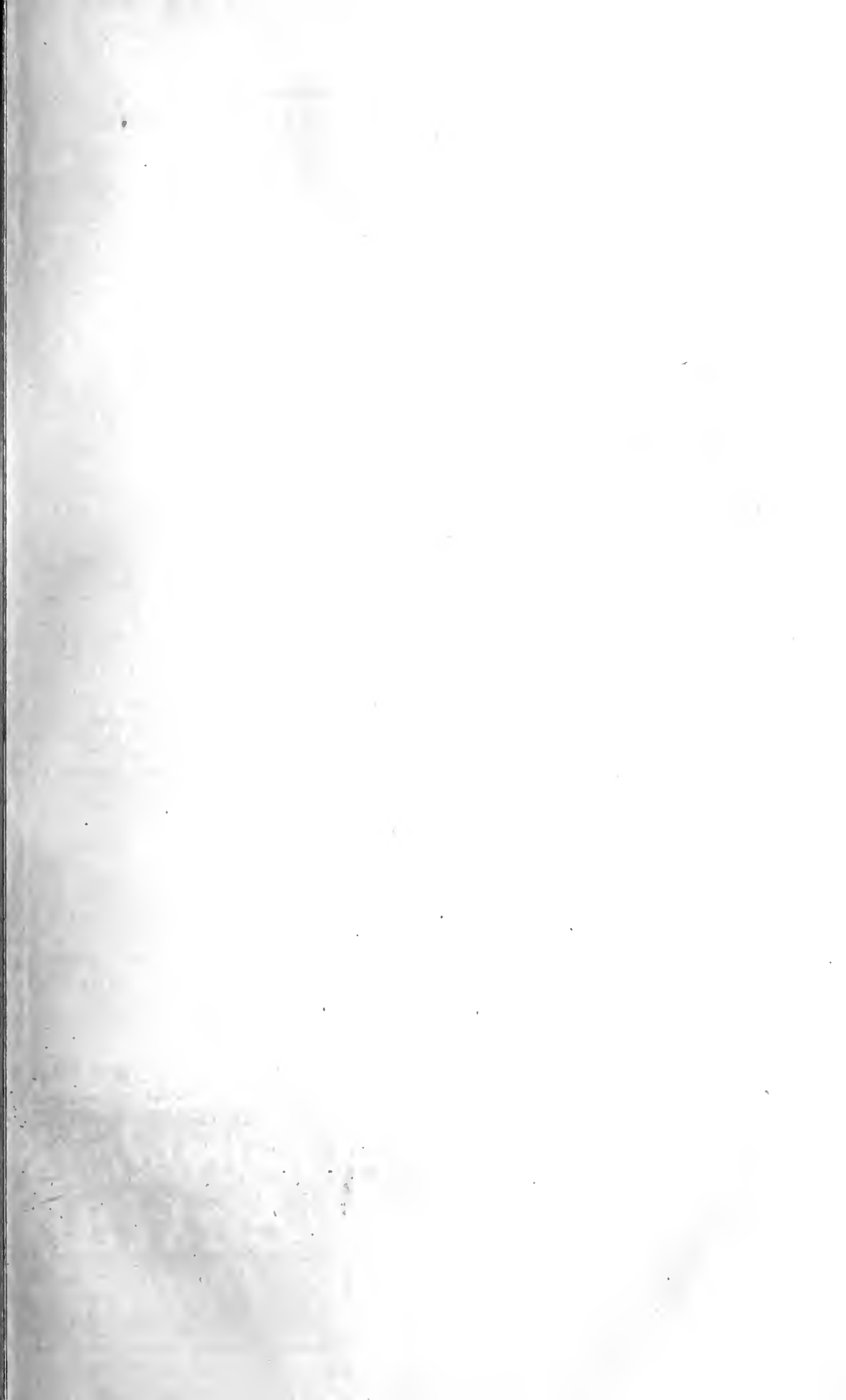
I.

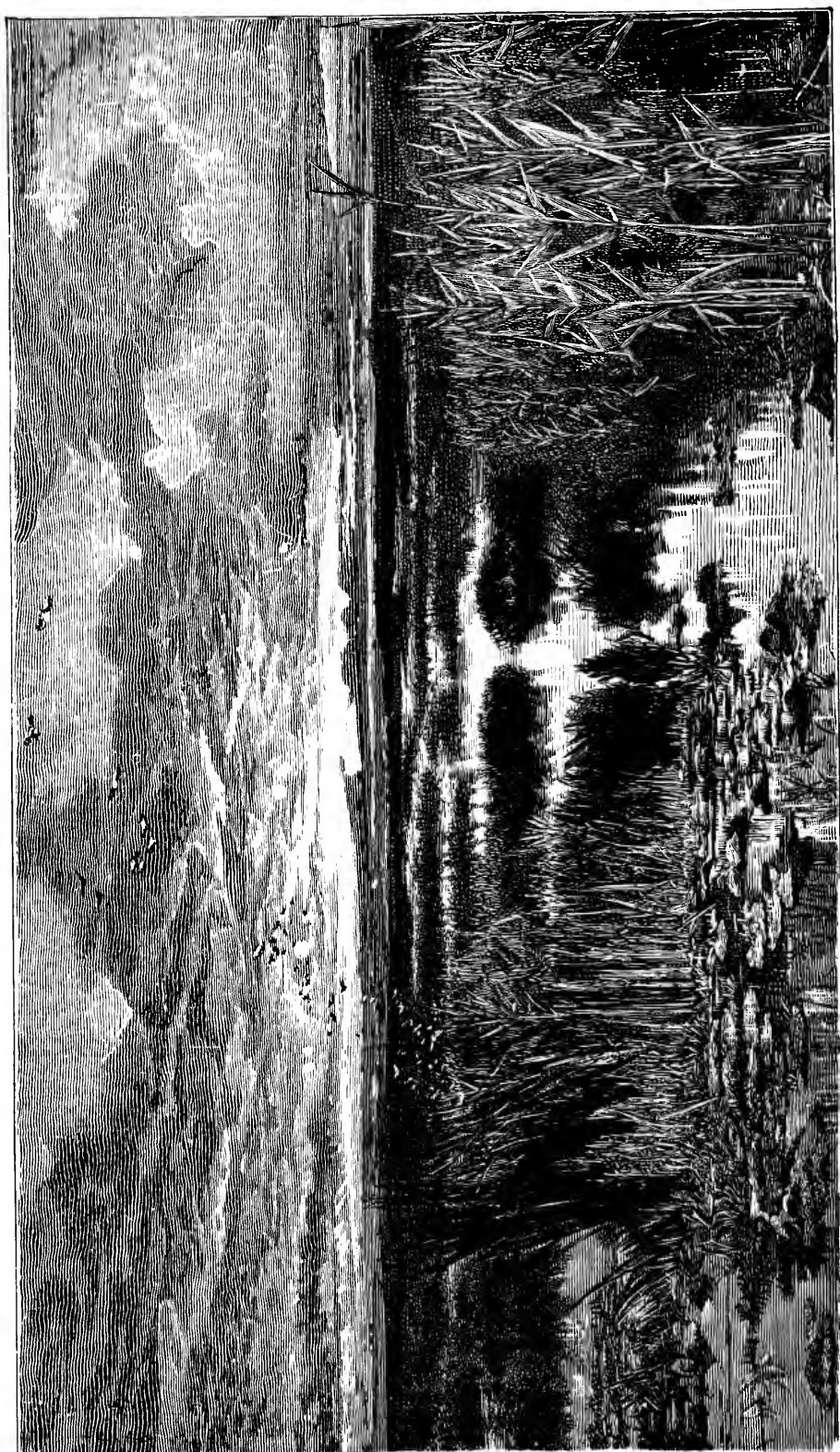
LOVE met me on a day,
 And Love was weeping :
 " Why weep, sweet Love ? " I said ;
 He drooped his golden head,
 Saying : " For love's decay,
 For hearts that are cold and dead,
 Ill worth the keeping."
 But while he spoke I spied
 A wicked arrow peeping
 From the quiver at his side,
 And when I stooped to kiss him,
 Before I could caress him,
 He seized the tiny dart,
 And threw it at my heart ;
 Then, like a lark in May,
 Fluttered and flew away.

II.

Love met us on a day,
 And Love was gay :
 " Well met, sweet Love," we said—
 He tossed his golden head
 Like a little child in play :
 He said, " O happy day !
 For not all hearts are dead,
 Not all are old and cold ;
 Smart cancels smart
 When heart to heart
 My silver chains enfold.
 " I wept," he said, " for loves not true ;
 I smile," he said, " for you and you "—
 Then lisping out some tender word,
 And looking up and laughing low,
 He snatched the bowstring from his bow,
 And bound us with the silver cord ;
 Nor ever shall the sad fates sever
 The twain that Love made one for ever.

GEORGE COTTERELL.





THE ARGOSY.

AUGUST, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR KATHERINE."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ARCHDEACON'S SILK STOCKINGS.

A CRY of terror broke from Vera's assailant when he saw a huge mastiff flying straight at him. He let go the bridle, and instinctively stooped and picked up a stone as the only means of defence that occurred to him; but he felt his chances of escape were small. Another few seconds and the dog's teeth would be in his throat. Vera was as terrified as the man, for she knew Lion would make short work of him; and she was by no means sure of being able to control the dog when he saw she was being molested by a tramp. She turned Firefly towards him, putting herself and the mare between the dog and the man, exclaiming:

"Down, Lion; down, sir; good dog."

Lion most reluctantly obeyed, and crouched down on his haunches, growling fiercely and glaring at his prey, longing for his mistress to give him permission to seize it.

"Now, one word from me and my dog would seize you. Give me back my watch and my whip, or I'll set him on you," said Vera.

"For mercy's sake don't, my lady. Let me go, and I'll never forget your kindness to my dying day."

"I don't suppose you will forget it, for this would be your dying day if I didn't keep my dog in. Down, Lion; quiet, sir," said Vera as the man meekly handed her back her watch and her whip, Lion growling fiercely as he did so.

"Now I shall leave my dog to guard you while I ride to Woodford for a policeman, and give you in charge," said Vera, not seriously intending to carry out this threat, but feeling it was really her duty, much as she disliked it, since it would necessitate her appearing in Court to prosecute the man. The man, however, begged so earnestly to be forgiven, and made so many promises of amendment, that Vera

finally relented, warning him that if she ever saw him in the neighbourhood again she would give him in charge. With this parting caution she rode off, followed by Lion, who deeply deplored his mistress's clemency, and told her so as plainly as a dejected air and deprecating eyes could speak.

Vera rode home quickly, thinking, as she went, of the excitement her adventure would cause on her return; thinking of her father's fright and her stepmother's wrath, and little dreaming of the very different scene which awaited her. For it is the unexpected which usually happens even when the expected has been unpleasant. Taking life all round, the disagreeable predominates over the agreeable, pain over pleasure, sorrow over joy; though there is a large amount of pleasure and of joy, too, on this side the grave, overbalanced though it be by pain and sorrow.

On reaching the Rectory, Vera dismounted and ran into the house in search of her father to tell him of the danger Lion had saved her from. She found Mr. Ryot-Tempest in his study, but not alone. His wife was with him, and both were looking so preternaturally grave that Vera wondered what domestic calamity had taken place in her absence. She burst into the room like a sunbeam; her pure, pale cheeks slightly flushed; her large, lustrous eyes sparkling with excitement; her lips eagerly parted, showing her pretty, pearly teeth; her pale golden hair gleaming under her dark felt hat; her slender, graceful figure shown to perfection in her habit. She was very fair to look upon; there was no denying that, as her stepmother confessed with bitterness.

"With whom have you been riding, Vera?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest coldly, before the girl could speak.

"With Lion; Mr. Hastings could not go to-day," replied Vera.

"We know that. We also know the cause which prevented him, though I should hardly have imagined that even you would have spoken of it in that bold, heartless fashion," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"Bold" was about the last word to apply to Vera, whose manner was singularly free from all forwardness, erring, if at all, on the side of shyness. Indeed, the sweet, maidenly reserve which characterised her was one of her special charms; and the pure, delicate white of her complexion, and the childlike innocence of her dark eyes, were the index of that indescribable something, that quintessence of purity, that reflection of a spotless soul which made the epithet "Bold" a libel. Mr. Ryot-Tempest flinched as his wife used it, for it revealed to Vera what he had already discovered, namely, that in spite of an outward veneer which passed for refinement, there was a vein of coarseness in his new wife which grated against his really refined nature.

"I merely stated a fact; the cause concerns no one but Mr. Hastings and myself," said Vera haughtily, turning a shade paler.

"Indeed! It does not concern your father, then, I suppose, that he is deprived of a curate and his daughter made the talk of the county through her heartless conduct?" said Mrs Ryot-Tempest with a slight sneer.

"I don't know to what you allude. So far as I am aware there has been nothing heartless in my conduct; and I decline to discuss this matter with anyone but my father and one other person whom it also concerns," said Vera.

"If by that other person you mean me, I am here on purpose to discuss it," replied her stepmother.

"I do not; I allude to Captain Raleigh, whose wife I shall be in a few months' time," said Vera.

"Captain Raleigh! You poor, deluded child! He is the greatest flirt alive, unless he has settled down since his marriage, for I should think he is married by this time; I heard of his engagement some time ago," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in a patronising tone.

"Forewarned is forearmed. You need not attempt to asperse Captain Raleigh's character to me; nothing you could say to him of me, or to me of him, would affect either of us one iota," said Vera angrily.

"Vera, my dear, you are forgetting yourself," murmured the Rector.

"I am accustomed to this treatment from Vera, Archdeacon; but let that pass. The fact is, Vera, you have gone too far with Mr. Hastings to draw back now; you have ridden with him alone almost daily for months."

"By your special desire and arrangement," interrupted Vera.

"His devotion and love have been so evident that you are looked upon as engaged by everyone; and if you can afford to be called a jilt, your father's position will not suffer his daughter to be so spoken of. For his sake you are bound to accept Mr. Hastings, if for no other reason."

"Father, will you allow Mrs. Tempest to speak to me in this way? I don't deserve such treatment. Until yesterday I had no suspicion that Mr. Hastings even thought of me except as a friend. How could I imagine such a thing when he was always speaking of himself as a 'priest,' and I knew he considered priests ought not to marry," said Vera, trembling with agitation as she turned to her father, but struggling to control her emotion.

"Don't quibble in that way, Vera, pray," interposed Mrs. Ryot-Tempest sharply. "No woman is ever ignorant of the fact when a man is in love with her. Acknowledge your fault and do the best you can to make reparation by accepting Mr. Hastings: an excellent man, in every way suitable to you and acceptable to your father."

"Unfortunately there is one slight objection; as Mr. Hastings knows, I am already virtually engaged to Captain Raleigh, and I shall never marry any one else," said Vera, coolly but with decision.

"I have no patience with you, Archdeacon ; how can you sit there and allow your daughter to defy you in this way ? Why don't you order her to her room until she has come to her senses ?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, now losing all control of her temper.

"Father, I shall telegraph to Uncle George to come and take me away till Captain Raleigh comes home ; he will not suffer me to be treated in this cruel way," said Vera, her great eyes filling with tears as she moved hastily to the door.

"Have you no spirit, Archdeacon ? Why don't you forbid her to do anything of the kind ? If she goes to your brother we shall lose all control over her," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest as the door closed on Vera.

"My dear Poppy, I think you were a trifle harsh ; I do indeed. Vera is so very high spirited, she cannot brook harshness ; and we have only defeated our own object, for if she goes to George she will be married to Raleigh at once," meekly observed the Archdeacon elect.

"Then prevent her from going ; keep her here by any means you like ; try persuasion if force fails with the spoilt child ; keep her here, and leave the rest to me. I'll engage to say she never marries Captain Raleigh, in spite of her impertinent assertion," said Mrs. Ryot Tempest, now fairly boiling with anger.

Vera's calm confidence in her lover had maddened her step-mother and roused the demon of jealousy which was within her. She was determined to separate these two lovers by some means. It was clear Vera was not to be coerced into marrying Mr. Hastings ; it was equally clear that calumny would not avail Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, for they would simply disbelieve anything she might say ; still she was determined they should never marry. She had a whole month before her in which to plot some means of preventing this marriage, and much may be done in one month by a jealous woman bent on mischief ; especially when circumstances favour one as they favoured Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

The first point to be achieved was to keep Vera at home, and this Mr. Ryot-Tempest undertook to accomplish, since he secured his wife's favour by so doing. Moreover he did not wish his child to leave him. He had never valued her so much as he did now, for she reminded him of his dear lost wife, whose loss he felt daily more and more. He had not much difficulty in dissuading Vera from telegraphing to her uncle. When he told her he wished her to remain and promised no more should be said about Mr. Hastings she agreed to stay at home. In point of fact Mr. Hastings was in Mr. Ryot-Tempest's eyes as objectionable a son-in-law as Captain Raleigh—his Ritualism was as grave an objection as Captain Raleigh's Catholicism ; of the two he preferred the latter ; real turtle was more to his taste than mock turtle ; moreover Mr. Hastings had not the advantage of being a distant cousin of the Ryots. Indeed, Mr. Ryot-Tempest had made up his mind to

consent to the marriage if he could persuade his wife to allow him to do so. He saw Vera's home life was by no means a happy one, and his conscience told him she was not to blame. Perhaps, too, now that the Archdeaconry had been offered him he saw less need for opposing the marriage ; it would not retard his promotion since that had already come.

So the storm ended in what was really an armed peace, for Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, though bent on mischief, was in her sweetest mood when they next met ; and Vera, gathering from one or two remarks of her father's that he meant to relent, was prepared to bear with her stepmother's moods for the short time she was to remain at home. It seemed, however, that she would not have much to put up with, for Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was most amiable. She refrained from reproaching Vera for riding alone when she heard of her adventure, and only regretted she had not given the man in charge lest he should turn out to be a burglar ; she agreed with her husband that his new revolver was certainly an acquisition and must be kept loaded in his dressing-room, where her jewel-case always stood ; and she made even more fuss over Lion than Vera herself did.

Vera was now allowed to ride, with Lion as her sole but efficient protector, without any opposition ; and, a few days after the storm in the study, she paid Reuben a visit at the forge on her way home from one of her rides.

It was the Saturday before Easter. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was engaged in superintending the decoration of the church, and her husband was gone to lunch with his bishop and sign the deeds and go through the formalities which constituted him Archdeacon, in which character he was to appear for the first time on Easter-day. Everyone was busy except Vera, the blacksmith included ; but he left his anvil to come out and talk to his beautiful visitor, of whom he had become very fond since Janet left him childless. He felt that the fact that he had saved her life bridged the social gulf between them more firmly than the fact that Janet had married Rex.

Reuben was looking almost himself again ; a shade greyer, a shade graver, a shade older than before his illness ; but still a fine, handsome giant of a man, strong as a tower, hardly past the prime of life—a goodly sight, with his bare, brawny, sinewy arms, his tawny beard and blue eyes. Lion rubbed his great head against the blacksmith's knees in token of friendship, and Vera looked admiringly at both.

"I think you and Lion are alike, Reuben ; you are both giants, and you are both strong, and you have both saved my life. At least, you saved my life, and Lion saved my watch the other day," said Vera.

"Indeed, Miss Vera ; how did he do that ?"

Vera told the story of her adventure, the blacksmith listening eagerly.

"What was the fellow like, Miss Vera ?" he said when Vera finished.

"He was young and tall and well-built; not a giant like you, you know, Reuben, but above the average size; and he looked very strong. He was clean-shaven, with small bright eyes, and he didn't look altogether a bad man."

"How was he dressed—did you notice?"

"Corduroy trousers, a sealskin cap, and a peajacket. But why, Reuben? I hope you have not seen him in this neighbourhood."

"I have, Miss Vera; I saw him last evening with Mark Brown, and they seemed as thick as thieves. I saw them in the wood as I came home from chapel. I doubt Mark is up to no good. I'll give the policeman a hint to be on the look-out, and I should tell the Rector—I mean the Archdeacon—if I were you, miss, though I know he thinks no end of Mark. He is one of the lost, I doubt, though I have done my best to save his soul; but the devil has snatched him out of my hands; he is a bad lot is Mark Brown," said Reuben slowly. "He is one of those who put their hands to the plough and then turn back, and so are unfit for heaven."

"Perhaps Mark's hand never reached the plough," said Vera with meaning, which, however, Reuben did not grasp. "I wish I had given that man in charge the other day; but I'll tell my father what you have told me, Reuben," she continued, having as little hope as the blacksmith that her father would pay much attention to the report.

And then, after a little more conversation, they parted, little thinking that the fair, smiling Vera would have passed through a furnace almost as hot as Reuben's, and Reuben himself through a purifying flame before they met again at the forge.

But happily for them, as for everyone else, the future was veiled; for, if we could know the storms to be weathered during the voyage of life before we set out on that eventful journey, how many of us, supposing we had the power to refuse, would venture to start? None but very *good* sailors, and they are few. Once started, however, there is no turning back; fog or gale, cyclone or tempest, on we must go; come shipwreck, come pirates, come fire, come hurricane, no turning back. Thank Heaven for it, then, that we do not know what is to come. Sometimes, it is true, there is the little cloud in the sky, scarcely bigger than a man's hand, which warns us of the coming storm; but oftener our trials are unexpected, we unprepared, the wind rises suddenly and the flapping sails are struck; oftenest the sun is shining brightest, we are feeling the most secure, when the storm breaks over us.

Such is life. Not all wind and rain, not all foul weather, but sunshine and fog, storm and calm, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain; plenty of all. And yet we grumble that life is short, and, strange to say, the most miserable often complain the loudest of its brevity; while on the other hand the question, "Is life worth living," is answered by many in the negative.

Truly, discontent is the besetting sin of the human race. As Reuben and Vera had foreseen, the Archdeacon, as we must now call Mr. Ryot-Tempest, paid but little attention to the fact that Mark had been seen talking to Vera's assailant. He was busy that evening trying on his new clothes and preparing for Easter Day, or he might have investigated the matter further. As it was, he was content to ask Mark if it were true; and Mark, after endeavouring to recollect the occurrence, at length succeeded in remembering he had directed a tramp to Ashchurch one evening; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest pronounced this account satisfactory, and pooh-poohed Vera's doubts as a piece of spite on her part against Mark.

But the next morning, when nearly all the villagers were at church—curiosity to see the Archdeacon having drawn a large congregation—Mark Brown was improving his time by smoking a pipe in a quarry with the man who had stopped Vera. This gentleman—who probably rejoiced in as many names as a prince of the blood—was known to Mark Brown as Jim Freeman; and their friendship, though of very recent date, was already intimate. It arose the day after Vera's adventure, when Mark was exercising a horse, accompanied by Lion. During the ride they met Freeman, whom Lion recognized, and, but for Mark, would have attacked. Mark guessed Freeman was the hero of Vera's adventure, and levied blackmail on him. Freeman responded generously, anxious to buy Mark's silence, and also anxious to cultivate his acquaintance, which he saw might be of service to him for the wickedness he had in hand. They had met twice since, and now they were literally as thick as thieves. Seated on some quarried blocks of stone, they smoked and made their arrangements for what Freeman considered a piece of professional business, and Mark a way: not quite an honest or a laudable way: but still a way of earning fifty pounds, which was to be his fee for services rendered. For Mark had discovered that the object which kept Freeman lingering in the neighbourhood, at the risk of being arrested for his attempt at robbing Vera, was Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's diamonds, whose fame had reached Freeman's ears. Simultaneously with Mark's discovery Freeman found that Mark would be a very useful tool, very easy to manipulate; and the meeting this Easter morning was to make the final arrangements for stealing the diamonds.

The plan was a very simple one.

Freeman was to be under Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's dressing-room window one night at a given time, and Mark was to drop the jewel-case out of the window to him when the rest of the household was asleep. The time fixed was the following Tuesday night. Mark knew his master and mistress were going to a party that evening, and if Mrs. Ryot-Tempest did not wear her diamonds his task would be all the easier; since, when the other servants and Vera were in bed, there would be no one to hear him hand the jewels to

Freeman. If Mrs. Ryot-Tempest wore the diamonds the robbery must be committed later in the night, after her return. Freeman was anxious to have the job done as soon as possible, and would have preferred that night or the following, but Mark would not agree to this. The robbery must be committed on a night when his master and mistress were out, because, in case of accidents, he had then a legitimate excuse for being up if discovered, as he always sat up for them. Moreover, there was the chance that Mrs. Ryot-Tempest would not wear her diamonds; she did not always do so; and Freeman agreed that in that event Tuesday night was the best time to fix.

Finally it was settled Freeman was to be under the dressing-room window at midnight on Tuesday, and to remain there till Mark gave him the jewels; he was then to hide Mark's fifty pounds in the hollow tree, and to get out of the country with his spoil as quickly as possible. Mark, on his side, was to take special care to lock Lion up as soon as his master and mistress had started, and on no account to leave him in his kennel for the night; for Freeman was far more afraid of the dog than of the Archdeacon's revolver, of which he had heard. But, "nothing venture, nothing have" was his motto; and relying on Mark's promises because he saw Mark was greedily longing for the fifty pounds he was to earn by keeping them, Freeman parted from his new friend.

It was true Mark was anxious to earn the money, but that was not his sole reason for undertaking to be an accomplice in the crime. The desire of revenge was stronger than the desire of gain in his mean nature, and he thought this robbery might, if cunningly carried out, supply him with the means of revenging himself on Vera, for the diabolical idea of throwing suspicion on her had occurred to him. He had little doubt that Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, whose dislike to Vera he had gauged accurately, would believe anything he chose to tell her against her step-daughter. He had not yet told her of Vera's midnight scene with Reuben; he would do so when the diamonds were missed, and if Reuben were suspected as well as Vera all the better; he would then be revenged on both. Such a trifling deviation from the truth as to declare Vera's meeting with Reuben took place a few nights before the robbery instead of a year ago was not likely to trouble Mark's conscience; he was prepared to swear it in a court of justice if necessary.

It is strange how quickly some natures develop evil. Mark's character had never been very good; his was a mean, cunning, selfish nature; but up to his hypocritical conduct at his baptism, when, indeed, the devil seemed to enter into him, he had committed no scandalous sin. His passion for Janet had proved a very hot-bed for forcing all the evil which lay latent in his soul. Had his love prospered it is probable he would have gone to his grave with no worse sins on his soul than selfishness, meanness and ill-temper, and

that sacrilegious baptism : a sufficiently heavy list, but trifling compared with the sins he was now contemplating. To have married Janet would not have raised him, for his love for her was not that holy thing which men call love, but passion ; and passion gratified or thwarted can only degrade the soul. Love is a purifying flame, passion a consuming fire ; love purifies the soul, passion defiles it ; love raises its victims to heaven, passion thrusts its prey down to the depths.

To have been rejected by Janet completed the work of destruction begun in Mark's soul when, in Reuben's chapel, he lied in the hope of winning her. He started then on his down-hill course and now he was going so fast he could not pull himself up. Circumstances, too, favoured him as they too often favour an evil career.

The party at which Mr. Ryot-Tempest was to make his *début* as Archdeacon, was a dinner-party to be followed by an "at home." Vera was not invited to the dinner-party and had declined the reception, which would have necessitated sending the carriage back to fetch her, and the house was five miles off. She rarely went out now, for she saw her step-mother disliked taking her, and the parties were very flat in her opinion when the only person she cared to meet was absent. To-night she was rather sorry she could not go, as she would have liked to have seen her father's little triumph ; but she kept her regrets to herself, as she put some finishing touches to her step-mother's dress, while she was waiting for the Archdeacon and the carriage.

"Why, you have not put on your diamonds!" said Vera in surprise, as she folded an opera-cloak round Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's white shoulders.

"No ; I want your father to be the centre of attraction to-night ; I am only shining by a reflected light : I am playing the moon to his sun," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest amiably. "I wish he would come down ; we shall be late. Ah, here he is ! Talk of the sun," she continued as the Archdeacon in his new evening dress entered the room almost as shyly as a girl at her first ball.

"My dear Poppy, I think these stockings are a trifle large," said the Archdeacon nervously, as he turned his little body round to show his little legs encased in silk stockings which hung like sacks round his thin calves.

The rest of his costume fitted him perfectly but the stockings completely spoilt the effect of the buckled shoes, the knee-breeches and high black silk waistcoat.

"My dear Ryot, you can't go in them ; they are fatal ; I never saw such an exhibition !" And with very questionable taste Mrs. Ryot-Tempest threw herself back in her chair and laughed till she cried.

"But what am I to do ? I have no others," said the new Archdeacon in despair, vexed at his wife's laughter ; for though personal vanity was not a conspicuous weakness of his, he flattered himself he had a good leg and was not sorry that the office of Archdeacon entitled him to exhibit it to his fellow-men.

"They must have been made for a giant like Reuben Foreman," he continued, looking modestly down at the offending stockings.

"You must put on a pair of mine, Ryot ; there is nothing else to be done ; and do be quick or we shall be late for dinner. Vera, I wish you would run up to my room and get your father a pair out of my top drawer," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, recovering herself.

Vera complied ; and having found the stockings, went into her father's dressing-room with them, the Archdeacon having followed her upstairs. This was the first time Vera had been into either of these rooms since her father's second marriage, and she glanced round the dressing-room, noticing a few changes that had been made, while the Archdeacon changed his stockings.

"Why, this is something new, papa, what is it?" said Vera, touching a leather case, with silver lock and handle, on the top of a chest-of-drawers.

"It is Poppy's jewel-case, my dear."

"What a strange place to keep it, I wonder she does not lock it up out of sight. Oh ! and this is your new revolver, papa ; I have not seen it before."

"Don't touch it Vera, pray ; it is loaded," interrupted the Archdeacon, nervously glancing up from his legs now clad in his wife's stockings at Vera, who was with difficulty obeying the injunction not to touch the revolver.

"Well, when the burglars pay us a visit, papa, you must call me and I'll fire it off at them ; but if those diamonds were mine I should send them to the bank as you suggested. Why, papa, those stockings are almost as tight as the others were too loose. I hope they won't split during the evening," said Vera, following her father downstairs.

"I trust not, my dear ; I trust not," said the Archdeacon, hurrying into the carriage where his wife was already awaiting him.

Mark came up to the carriage-window before they drove off ; ostensibly to ask if they would require coffee on their return ; in reality to see if Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had on her diamonds ; and retired exultant at finding she had pink camellias in her hair and gold earrings in her ears, and gold bracelets on her arms. It was as he wished : the diamonds were safe upstairs in their case, and Mark considered his fifty pounds was already as good as earned.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ROBBERY.

VERA sat gazing into the paling western sky : day was melting into night, a glorious, laughing, April day fading into a lovely, smiling night ; all day the sunbeams had laughed and danced on the green-sward and the hillsides, now the laughter was hushed, but the stars

were beginning to smile in the pale face of heaven ; presently their mirth would also be quenched by the moon, with her calm dignity, her cold glance, her grave presence, rebuking the stars for their levity.

A white mist was rising in the valley, wrapping the mill-chimneys in its soft folds till they disappeared, as though no signs of labour should mar the rest and peace of that evening scene, fair and lovely as the girl who sat dreamily watching it.

The blackbirds were singing their loud, happy song, their shyness vanishing with the daylight ; the thrushes that had been singing all day were not yet tired, and trilled out their gentler melody in sweeter notes ; while above them all, as if angry at their presumption for interrupting her, was to be heard the wild, passionate note of the nightingale, pouring out her soul in an ecstasy of joy and song. Innocent pleasures these, when eye and ear both are charmed with nature's pure delights, but they raise a country life above a town life as poetry is above prose.

Vera had felt sad and lonely as she ate her solitary dinner, after seeing the Archdeacon and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest start for the dinner-party ; but now, as she half-sat, half-lay, in the cushioned bay of the drawing-room window, a magnificent view stretched before her, the beauty of the scene entered her soul and filled her with that strange, mysterious longing, half joy and half pain, which highly-strung natures and artistic temperaments feel when face to face with the beautiful.

Her reverie was interrupted several times by the servants, who, with the exception of Mark Brown and Holmes, all came one after the other to ask to go out for a walk, knowing Vera was much more lenient in this way than Mrs. Ryot-Tempest ; and without thinking what she was doing she gave permission to all, for her thoughts were far away from the Rectory. At first they dwelt on a subject which had occupied her mind much lately, namely, the decision she had lately come to, to embrace publicly as soon as she was of age the faith into which she was baptised. She had been corresponding with Father Ambrose on the subject ever since her mother's death, and recently had been under instruction. She was daily expecting to hear from him, and was hoping he would come to England. Perhaps he would marry her. And then her thoughts flew to Captain Raleigh, who would be sailing for England in a few days' time. And then with the nightingale singing an accompaniment, Vera lost herself in a delicious day-dream of love and anticipated happiness, from which she was rudely awakened by Mary, who came to say that Reuben Foreman wished to speak to her.

"Why, Mary, I thought you asked to go out this evening," exclaimed Vera, starting up from her reverie.

"So I did, ma'am, but I found all the other servants were going except Mark, and so I thought I would stay at home with you, Miss Vera. Mrs. Canter would never forgive me if I left you alone. If

it were not for you, Miss Vera, I would not stay another day here, neither would cook ; the place is quite different now to what it used to be."

"I hope you will stay as long as I am here, Mary ; but I must not keep Reuben waiting ; ask him into the study," said Vera, anxious to stop any confidences about her step-mother ; for only the other day Mary had told her she had caught Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in Vera's room when she was out, reading her letters.

Reuben's gigantic figure seemed to half-fill the Archdeacon's study, though it was by no means a small room. He accepted Vera's invitation to be seated, and plunged at once into the object of his visit.

"I am sorry the Archdeacon is out, Miss Vera, for I came to tell him to keep an eye on Mark Brown. He was seen on Sunday in a quarry with that man who took your watch, and I am as sure as I am sitting here, those two did not meet there for nothing. There is something in the wind. My belief is they are after the plate."

"Or Mrs. Tempest's diamonds, perhaps ; they are far more valuable than our plate. I do hope not, Reuben. I have warned my father, but it is no use ; both he and Mrs. Tempest think Mark can't do wrong. I wish you could have seen him ; perhaps you might have convinced him. But why don't the police arrest that man, since he will keep in the neighbourhood ?"

"They would if they could catch him, but he is too clever for these country police. It was one of our deacons who saw Mark and him together on Sunday, and by chance he mentioned it to me just now ; so I came in at once to tell the master."

Vera thanked the blacksmith, who, after a little more conversation, took his leave, having been in the study, perhaps, ten minutes.

After he was gone Vera went and fed Lion, and then returned to the drawing-room, feeling very nervous, starting at every noise, and regretting she had allowed all the servants to go out. She could settle to nothing ; she could neither work nor read ; and if she sang she could not hear any other sound which might break the deep silence reigning in the almost empty house. At last ten o'clock struck, and to her relief she heard the other servants come in, and soon after she went to bed. Her room was on the same landing as her father's dressing-room, and before she went to her bedroom she peeped into the dressing-room to see if the jewels were all right.

Yes, there stood the jewel-case, and there, too, lay the loaded revolver, just as she had seen them a few hours ago ; she saw that the window was barred, and then shutting the door she went to her own room and locked herself in.

In about an hour's time she was sound asleep. She never knew how long she slept, but she distinctly remembered having a most vivid dream soon after she lost consciousness. She dreamt she heard a noise in the dressing-room, like the opening of the window, and remembering the jewels about which she had been so anxiously

thinking that evening, she rose in her sleep, and slipping on her dressing-gown and slippers, lighted a candle, unlocked her door gently and crept down the landing to the dressing-room, the door of which she found ajar. At that moment she heard carriage-wheels in the drive, and knowing her father was not home, she paused a moment as the wheels approached the house, and then she pushed the door open and entered the room.

This was no dream ; it actually happened ; she did all she dreamt she had done and remembered it perfectly when she awoke. This took place about half-past twelve o'clock. But before following Vera into the dressing-room, we must explain what brought the Archdeacon and his wife home two hours earlier than they were expected.

It was a very small cause, but then momentous events often spring from very small causes. This was nothing greater than a hole in one of the Archdeacon's silk stockings. The dinner had passed off without a hitch ; the new Archdeacon had received as much attention from his noble host and hostess as he could desire ; in fact, he was the hero of the evening, the honoured guest of the party, and received many congratulations on his promotion : congratulations which his wife shared, for it was well known her influence with her cousin, the Bishop, had more to do with the appointment than the Archdeacon's scholarship on which he was so wont to pride himself.

About eleven o'clock the reception which followed the dinner-party began, and, as the rooms began to fill, the Archdeacon found himself the centre of a group of clerical friends, all anxious, more or less, to curry favour with him. As he stood talking, Mrs. Ryot Tempest, seated on a sofa which enabled her to obtain a full view of him, was glancing at him proudly and at the same time critically, when she suddenly saw to her horror that one of his, or rather her stockings worn by him was split at the seam. It was a small hole but distinctly visible, and, as she satisfied herself, though small it was increasing. She instantly decided that he must be taken away before anyone else noticed it ; such a contretemps would entirely spoil his archidiaconal triumph.

If the hole were discovered the stockings would bring ridicule on the Archdeacon. The Archdeacon if allowed to remain much longer would bring ridicule on his office, for in his elated state he was certain to air both his classics and his ancestors, and his pretended scholarship was as great a joke in the county as the pedigree of the Ryots and the noble connections of the Tempests. Clearly, then, she must take him home at once ; but to accomplish this a little artifice was necessary, as it was too early to leave without an excuse.

Needless to say Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was quite equal to an occasion of this kind. She swam gracefully through the reception-rooms, pausing here and there to tell people she hated how delighted she was to see them, till she reached the entrance hall, where, sinking on to a sofa, she sent one footman to order her carriage and another to

fetch the Archdeacon and tell him she was faint : a message which promptly brought the hen-pecked little man to her side. And not till they were safely off the premises did she tell him the real reason for their early departure.

Mark Brown had been told not to expect them home before two o'clock, so he calculated if he could get the other servants to bed early he would have plenty of time to commit the robbery before they returned. He spent almost as restless and nervous an evening as Vera, for the blacksmith's visit to her disconcerted him, and Reuben's subsequent conversation with him as he passed through the stable-yard was not calculated to quiet any qualms of conscience or calm any fears of discovery. Reuben took the opportunity of meeting him to warn him that he had been seen several times in the society of a notorious thief, and he accompanied this warning with a sermon on the torments of that place, to which, in his opinion—an opinion he did not scruple to advance—Mark was travelling as fast as possible. He concluded with the comfortable assurance that Mark's sin would undoubtedly find him out, if not in this world in the next, where the consequences would be as many times worse than if discovered here, as that place to which Mark was travelling was hotter than his furnace.

When Reuben, having at last exhausted his eloquence, left, Mark turned his attention to Lion, whom he, with much difficulty, enticed into the stable, where he locked him up : the only result of the blacksmith's sermon being to make him take extra precautions against discovery. His next anxiety was to get the servants to bed early. But this was a delicate task, since he was obliged to conceal his wishes lest he should rouse any suspicion. Moreover, the servants took advantage of the absence of their master and mistress to have a hot supper ; for mice can afford to toast their cheese when the cat is out ; and Mark, though by no means averse to the pleasures of the table, particularly when tripe and onions form an item in the feast as on this occasion, nevertheless thought supper would never end.

Vera he knew went to bed early, and at last he had the pleasure of seeing the cook, who was always the last of the servants to retire, take her candle and go yawning up to bed about half-past eleven. Then he smoked a pipe over the kitchen fire, but he was as nervous as a child, and started at every sound. Still he never flinched from his purpose ; he would earn his fifty pounds and spend it on going to Manitoba to see Janet. As the kitchen clock struck twelve he took off his boots and crept up the back stairs in his socks to listen at the doors of the servants' rooms. All was as quiet as he could desire ; not a sound disturbed the silence of the attics. Satisfied that the servants were all sound asleep, he then crept down to Vera's room and listened at her door. Here all was perfectly quiet, not a sound was audible. But it was rather too early to perform the work he was engaged in. Freeman might not be punctual ; Mark would

give him twenty minutes' grace ; so he went downstairs to smoke another pipe.

The pipe finished he crept upstairs again, by the front staircase this time and with a candle in his hand. He went into his master's dressing-room and saw the jewel-case standing, as he knew it always stood, on the chest of drawers. He tried to force the lock but in vain. Had he done so, in all probability only half the contents would have reached his confederate. Then he opened the window which gave on to the eastern side of the house, and leaning out, whispered :

"Are you there, Freeman?"

"All right. Hand them out. I hear wheels," answered Freeman in a loud whisper.

Mark listened intently for a few seconds and hearing the sound of approaching wheels, decided not a moment was to be lost. It must be now or never. So he stepped to the drawers, seized the jewel-case and dropped it out of the window.

"Remember, fifty pounds in the hollow-tree or I'll turn Queen's evidence," he whispered.

"Right you are," said Freeman, deftly catching the case ; and running noiselessly across the lawn, he disappeared in the shrubbery.

As Mark withdrew his head from the window, the door opened, and Vera, candle in hand, walked into the room, she did not appear to see Mark who was partly hidden by the window curtains, but moved quickly to the chest of drawers where lay the revolver. Mark however was quicker, and just as Vera laid her little white hand on it, Mark seized it. A brief struggle ensued, in which the revolver went off, and Mark fell to the ground with a bullet in his left arm. The report woke Vera, who finding herself in her father's dressing-room with Mark Brown lying groaning at her feet, and a revolver on the floor between them, stood for a few moments paralysed with fear. Then giving a loud cry of horror, she flew out of the room towards the stairs, her hair rippling down her back, her cheeks pale with terror, her great eyes dilating with fear.

"Norah ! Norah ! Norah !" cried Vera, who scarcely knew where she was or what she was doing ; but, as a child, Norah had always come to her aid in all her troubles, and force of habit made her cry out for her now.

The report of the revolver occurred just as Mr. Ryot-Tempest opened the hall door with his latch-key, and, recognising Vera's voice, his paternal instinct got the better of his nervousness, and he rushed upstairs, leaving his wife to get out of the carriage as best she could.

At the top of the stairs he met Vera, who fell fainting into his arms. Her screams had aroused the other servants, who, with candles in their hands and in various states of *déshabillé*, now clustered round their master and his beautiful daughter.

"My child! my child! what has happened?" gasped the Archdeacon, glancing anxiously at the now unconscious Vera.

No one could answer this question; the frightened servants were too terrified to speak coherently. Mrs. Tempest's maid, Holmes, alone had the presence of mind to help the Archdeacon to place Vera on the floor, and then to call for water, being too nervous to fetch any herself.

Before any one had the courage to obey Holmes's order Mrs. Ryot-Tempest reached the top of the stairs, looking as black as thunder.

"What is the meaning of all this uproar in the middle of the night?" she asked coldly, glancing at the unconscious Vera with a look of unmistakable aversion.

"We don't know, my dear; there was a pistol fired just as I entered the house, and Vera fainted in my arms," said the Archdeacon.

"Really, Archdeacon, I wonder you have not more presence of mind! Pray let the house be searched instead of every one staring at a fainting girl. Carry Vera to her room, and let Holmes attend to her, and the rest of you search the house," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, sweeping down the landing to her own room followed by the butler and cook, while Mary and the Archdeacon carried Vera to her room.

A minute later a cry of "Thieves! thieves! thieves!" rang through the house, as Mrs. Ryot-Tempest discovered her jewel-case was stolen, and that Mark was lying wounded on the floor of the dressing-room, which she had entered attracted by the light and his groans.

All was now confusion worse confounded; a domestic chaos ruled the Rectory world. But as in larger worlds chaos gradually resolved itself into order, so the panic-stricken household by degrees separated itself into groups. The Archdeacon and most of the servants rushed wildly about the house, searching in the least likely places for the robbers; Holmes and Mary remained with Vera; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest devoted herself to the suffering Mark, to whom no one else vouchsafed the least attention, though he was still lying on the floor where he had fallen.

He had taken advantage of the few minutes which elapsed between the shot which wounded him and the entrance of his mistress to decide upon his course of action, and part of his plan was to exaggerate his wounds. The other part was very simple, it was merely to invert the truth and maintain that he surprised Vera in stealing the jewels, adding that she fired at him with intent to kill him, and thus get rid of the only witness against her. By this means he would divert all suspicion from himself; he would be able to pose as a faithful servant; and, above all, he would revenge himself on Vera. He had a difficult game to play, he knew, and he was no means sure of winning; but he felt certain he had a powerful ally in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who he hoped would believe his story and not Vera's, against whom the circumstantial evidence was strong.

The diamonds were gone. Mark was prepared to swear he had

seen Vera drop them out of the window too late to save them. He was wounded; he would swear Vera shot him. No one else was present, who could contradict him? "Lucky for me I was wounded instead of her," he thought to himself as Mrs. Ryot-Tempest made a feeble attempt to bandage his wound with a towel torn into strips.

During this process, all that Mrs. Ryot-Tempest could elicit from Mark at first was groans and broken sentences, such as, "Too late!" "Oh! the jewels!" "I tried to save them!" "I am shot! I am shot!"

"Who shot you?" demanded Mrs. Ryot-Tempest; but she had to ask the question several times before she received a direct answer.

"Don't ask me, ma'am!" groaned Mark at last.

"I insist upon knowing. Who shot you?"

"Miss Vera.—Oh! the diamonds, the diamonds!"

"Miss Vera! What, by mistake for the thief?"

"No; on purpose. I was too late to save the diamonds.—Oh! the pain! the pain!"

"On purpose! What do you mean, Mark? Try and tell me. I'll send for the doctor as soon as I can make some one hear," replied Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, ringing the bell violently.

"I came in just as Miss Vera had dropped the jewel-case out of the window, and she shot me."

"How horrible! Are you sure, Mark?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, quite unable at first to believe this story, though already inwardly hoping it was true; for if so, here was a means of preventing Vera's marriage with Captain Raleigh, who was much too proud a man to marry a dishonest wife.

"Look, ma'am, look!" said Mark, pointing to his wounded arm. "But I'll have the law of her, though she is a lady and master's daughter, that I will."

"It is too horrible," repeated Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, as cook, who had heard a good deal of the above conversation, now showed herself in answer to the bell.

"Tell coachman to ride for the doctor at once; tell him to take Firefly," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest. And Mark knew his story had found one believer, for under ordinary circumstances Mrs. Tempest would never have dreamt, domestic tyrant as she was, of ordering Vera's mare to be used.

"That he shan't ride Firefly," thought cook to herself, inwardly resolving to deliver only the first part of the message, and not that till she had told Vera the substance of the conversation she had overheard.

"I could go myself, ma'am, and save the doctor the trouble of coming here. It would be quicker, too," said Mark, who was anxious to secure his fifty pounds, and thought the visit to the doctor would give him an opportunity of going to the hollow tree in quest of it.

"If you feel well enough, go yourself; it will save time; but I don't suppose he will extract the bullet till daylight. Nothing can be done in this painful matter to-night, Mark. I will see you about it again in the morning, when I have broken the terrible truth to your poor master."

Though she thus spoke, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest did not believe Vera was really guilty of either stealing her diamonds or shooting Mark. In her heart she knew that even to suggest such a thing in Vera was not more absurd than it was impossible. She strongly suspected that Mark was the thief, and that Vera had fired at him, as she had said she would fire at a burglar if one appeared; but she had decided to give full credence to Mark's story, and thus prevent her marriage. She went to her room to consider how to tell the Archdeacon, and, having told him, how to make him believe this incredible story, whilst Mark rode off to the doctor.

About an hour later, Mark, having had his arm properly bandaged and kept his own counsel as to how he received his wound, knowing full well if he told the doctor the same tale he had told Mrs. Ryot-Tempest he would in all probability horsewhip him for his pains, he reached the hollow tree.

Here he dismounted, and fastening his horse, not Firefly, to a paling, he knelt down and felt for his fifty pounds, which, as he had bargained for gold, not notes, he expected to find tied up in a bag. Instead of the expected bag, however, he found the jewel-casket, unlocked, and, to his intense disgust, empty.

Empty! no, not empty—at least, not quite. It contained a piece of paper, he found, on examining it, and his spirits rose again for a moment, for the paper might be a cheque. He struck a match, and by its light found it was no cheque, but only a strip of paper containing the following words: "Sold. The case was empty. By-by."

Was this true or false?

That he was "sold" there was no doubt; but had Freeman, too, been taken in? Was the case as empty when he had handed it to Freeman as it was now? If so, where were the diamonds? In any case, where were the diamonds? Had he been at all this trouble for nothing? Had he been wounded for nothing? Had he run the risk of being arrested as an accomplice in a burglary for nothing?

No, not for nothing. He had not won the fifty pounds, it is true; but he had gained something dearer—revenge! And with the empty jewel-case tied in front of him, to be used as a further proof of Vera's guilt, he rode home, having first carefully destroyed Freeman's written message.

That message spoke the truth; the jewel-case was empty when Mark handed it to Freeman; and this fact altered that gentleman's plans. He had intended leaving England as soon as the diamonds were safe in his hands; but when he discovered he had been duped, he determined not to leave the country, but to remain in hiding in

London. Still it was possible he might be able to turn his disappointment to good account ; for if, as he began to suspect, Mark Brown had deceived him and stolen the diamonds, he intended to turn Queen's evidence.

For the present, however, he could do nothing except leave Woodford, where he was "wanted" for assaulting Vera ; so he started that night for London, walking to a distant station to catch an early train. In London he would be safer than anywhere else. Moreover, he would be able to watch all the papers, and no doubt the jewel robbery would be in them in a day or two. So, as Mark was riding back to the Rectory, Freeman, inwardly cursing him with all his heart, was on his way to London.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARK'S REVENGE.

MRS. RYOT-TEMPEST, though a clever woman, had a very difficult task to perform. She wanted to retain her power over the Archdeacon, and at the same time to persuade him Vera had stolen her diamonds and shot Mark Brown. Fortunately for her purpose, Mark Brown was wounded ; still more fortunately, he was prepared to swear Vera had wounded him ; and, best of all, he was determined to prosecute her for so doing. If he could only be kept up to this, it might be possible to hush up the loss of the diamonds, and thus enable her to pose as a self-sacrificing victim, whose devotion to her husband prevented her from prosecuting his daughter, which she had decided to refuse to do. At any rate, her present course was to make as much fuss about Mark's wound and as little fuss about the diamonds as possible. She had need of all the wit she possessed to win the game she was playing.

Her first and most difficult move was to persuade the Archdeacon that Vera was guilty. Having succeeded with him, there remained public opinion and Captain Raleigh to overcome ; and, of the two, the latter would be the more difficult to convince. The proverb, "Throw mud, and some is sure to stick," is true ; and she had little doubt that if the case got into the papers, there would be plenty of people who would believe in Vera's guilt, but that Captain Raleigh would be the last person in the world, except Mrs. Canter, to do so.

It was very late, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was very sleepy, but bed was not to be thought of until she had apprised the Archdeacon of his daughter's crime. Accordingly, when Mark went to the doctor, she sent a peremptory message to the Archdeacon to come at once to her room. The little man obeyed promptly, evidently remembering, in his maturity, one of the maxims drilled into him in his youth : "Do as you are bid, and do it at once."

"We can discover no traces of the thieves, Poppy," he said, sinking wearily into the first chair he came to.

"I am not surprised, though the thief is probably not very far off. Shut the door, Archdeacon, please ; I have something very important to say to you."

"Certainly, my dear ; certainly ; but will you excuse me for one moment ? I want just to see how Vera is first," said the Archdeacon, rising and moving towards the door.

"Never mind her just now ; she's asleep, so there is no need to disturb her," said his wife, anxious to prevent the Archdeacon from seeing Vera, and hearing her version of what had occurred before he heard Mark's story.

"I am glad of that. Poor child, what a narrow escape she has had. I can scarcely realise what a providential thing it is that she was not shot. By the way, I hear Mark is wounded ; is it serious ?" said the Archdeacon, shutting the door and resuming his seat when he heard Vera was asleep.

There was a fire in the room and he was sitting in front of it, while Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, with her feet on the fender, was lounging in an easy-chair, still in her dinner-dress.

"Most fortunately his wound does not appear dangerous at present ; he has a bullet in his left arm ; happily for us all it is not in a vital part. It is a terrible business, Archdeacon ; a terrible business," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, rising to her feet as she spoke and gazing into the fire as she stood leaning on the chimney-piece with one foot on the fender.

"It is, indeed, my dear ; your diamonds are a most serious loss ; I can but regret that you were not guided by me when I advised you to send them to the bank," said the Archdeacon, unable to resist this reproach.

"Oh ! as for the diamonds, they are the least part of the terrible trouble that has come to us ; as far as they are concerned they are gone, and there is an end of them ; it is Mark's wound which distresses me far more than my diamonds."

"That is very kind of you, Poppy, but I imagine from what you tell me, Mark's wound is not serious ; probably in a few weeks he will be quite well ; meanwhile we must do all we can to recover your jewels."

"We must do nothing of the kind ; the less we say or do about them the better. Unfortunately for us, Mark is not disposed to be so magnanimous as I am. He is fully determined to prosecute his assailant for wounding with intent to kill, and no amount of persuasion or bribery will hinder him from so doing," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, speaking sharply and with great decision.

"But who is he to prosecute ? we have no clue to the person," demanded the Archdeacon.

"I beg your pardon, the person is in this very house," said Mrs.

Ryot-Tempest still keeping one hand on the chimney-piece, but turning her graceful figure round so as to face her husband, who sat looking up at her in amazement.

"In this house? Impossible! My dear Poppy, I am quite sure none of the other servants would have done such a thing; they are as honest as Mark himself."

"Possibly; but it was not one of the servants who shot him," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest coldly.

"Then who was it? Where is the fellow?"

"It was not a fellow; it was Vera."

"Vera! What do you mean?" exclaimed the Archdeacon springing to his feet as if he, too, had been shot.

"I mean what I say. Mark surprised Vera handing my jewel-case to some accomplice outside the window, and she shot him."

"Who—who—who has dared to say such a thing of Vera?" stammered the Archdeacon, beginning to walk rapidly up and down the room in front of the fire, his excitement preventing him from standing still, but fear of his wife moderating his anger.

"Mark says so. Moreover facts are facts, Ryot. Painful as it must be to you to be told such a thing, we cannot get over these facts; the jewel-case is gone; Mark is wounded; and Vera frightened, no doubt, at her own wickedness, roused the rest of the house by her screams, and fell fainting into your arms when we returned."

"All that may or may not be true, but that Vera should attempt to steal your diamonds is simply impossible. She is my daughter and a Ryot-Tempest, therefore the accusation, if not so monstrous, would be ridiculous. It is quite possible that Mark was wounded by Vera, who probably mistook him for the real thief—indeed, it is possible he is the culprit," said the Archdeacon.

"How can you be so uncharitable, Archdeacon? Surely you cannot accuse a faithful servant of such a crime, even to screen your own daughter?"

The Archdeacon, who had been pacing restlessly up and down the large rug in front of the fire, now stopped suddenly before his wife; the colour left his cheeks, he grew as white as his collar, as he grasped the full extent of the calamity which had overtaken him. This woman, whom he had made his wife, actually dared to believe that a Ryot-Tempest, and that Ryot-Tempest his own daughter, would stoop to commit a robbery, and dare to shoot a man who had discovered her in the act. He felt as if he had put his hand in his bosom and grasped a snake; a chill sense of horror crept over him, such as one feels when accidentally brought in contact with a reptile. His face betrayed this sensation, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, well-versed as she was in the feelings of men, knew her husband had entered on the stage of death in his passion for her.

For the history of passion is the same as the history of life. If it be true that worlds, like living creatures, have their periods of birth,

growth, maturity, decay and death, so it is true of passion, which is a material thing. Love is spiritual, and therefore deathless, passion is material, and therefore subject to the laws which govern all material things: from the snowdrop which shows its modest head amid the frosts of February; the innocent, laughing child which gathers it; the lark which carols forth its brief but joyous winter song meanwhile; to the sun, which, surrounded by other suns and other worlds and other systems, all subject to the same law, looks down through the clouds which veil its splendour on child and bird and flower.

True, death, the final stage towards which all things tend, may cut off snowdrop and child and skylark before they reach the stages of maturity or decay: it is even conceivable that some tremendous catastrophe may quench the glorious light of the sun before its period of decay arrives: but these are the exceptions, not the rule.

The Archdeacon's passion for his wife passed at that moment when he paused before her from the stage of decay, which it had entered soon after his marriage, to the stage of death: and she knew it.

"Answer me one question, please: is it possible you can believe this of Vera?" he said in a voice which commanded her respect in spite of herself.

It was a momentous question, and she knew much depended on her answer. If she said "no" his dying passion might revive; if she said "yes" her power over him was gone; power was sweet to her, but revenge was sweeter. For one moment she hesitated and then she answered.

"Yes."

The Archdeacon said not a word, but turned abruptly on his heel and left the room, to return no more that night.

He went to his study, and setting light to the fire which was laid in the grate, he threw himself, shivering with misery as much as with cold, into his easy-chair. There he sat wide-awake till daylight struggled through the shutters. More than once during the night the tears ran down his thin, sallow cheeks; more than once he stretched out his hand and took up not Debrett, nor Lemprière, but that third Book which lay on his writing-table, and tried to read. But wise as that Book is, it could not help him to undo the fatal mistake he had made when he married Mrs. Jamieson.

He spent the night in vain regrets. He regretted impatiently his folly in trusting Mark Brown in spite of the warnings he had received; he regretted deeply having prevented Vera's marriage with Captain Raleigh; he regretted bitterly his own marriage; he regretted tenderly the wife of his youth, whose gentle spirit seemed hovering near him that sorrowful night—as perhaps it was; who shall say? There are times when the dead seem so near that we might behold them with our bodily eyes, if those eyes were not holden out of compassion for our bodily weakness; we feel their presence though we cannot see them; faith, not reason, tells us they are there.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had wounded her husband in his tenderest point ; she had aspersed the honour of the Ryot-Tempests. He was not concerned so much for Vera as for himself ; and this not only because, like most men, he was selfish, but because he did not deem it possible that anyone besides his wife would give credence to Mark's story. No doubt in the morning Vera would give a satisfactory account of what had occurred, though this could not change his feelings to his wife. She had sinned unpardonably. Even if he forgave he could never forget her conduct ; and it is doubtful if we ever really forgive what we do not also forget.

When the daylight found its way through the shutters the Archdeacon put out the lamp and fell into a troubled sleep from which he was awakened by the first bell, when he went upstairs to his dressing-room and took a bath to refresh himself. At half-past eight he went down to breakfast, and found that his wife, who had been interviewing Mark, was already down ; a very unusual thing ; for she often breakfasted in bed. He did not speak to her, but on Vera's entrance a minute or two later, he kissed her with more affection than he usually evinced, and asked anxiously how she was.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest took no notice of her step-daughter, but Mark's story having reached Vera's ears through Mary, she was at no loss to account for her step-mother's silence, which she met with an air of supreme contempt and indifference. During breakfast, which was eaten in almost dead silence, the post-bag was brought in, and on opening it the Archdeacon handed Vera the letter she was expecting from Father Ambrose : on reading which her face softened and a look of delight spread over it, which did not escape her step-mother, who suspected the letter was from Captain Raleigh. At last the silent meal of which no one partook very freely came to an end. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest leant back in her chair and for the first time that day addressed her husband.

"May I inquire, Archdeacon, what course you intend to pursue with regard to this terrible business ?"

"I cannot decide that until I learn from Vera exactly what took place last night," said the Archdeacon coldly, not raising his eyes from his paper, which he was pretending to read.

"Then it would be as well if you would come to some decision as soon as possible ; otherwise you may have the police here to arrest your daughter before you have decided how to avert such a disgrace," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in an indifferent tone, as if the arrest of Vera was not a matter of any very great importance.

"The police here to arrest me ! What does Mrs. Tempest mean, papa ?" said Vera with a scornful little laugh.

"What I say ; to arrest you for shooting Mark Brown, who surprised you in the act of giving my diamonds to some accomplice. Probably to Reuben Foreman, who I understand was closeted with you the greater part of last evening," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"Mrs. Tempest," said the Archdeacon, forgetting the Ryot for the first and only time in his life, as he moved towards Vera and put his hand on her shoulder: "Mrs. Tempest, I will not suffer Vera to be insulted in this way. Vera, my dear, go to my study; I will follow you immediately."

"You have no time for heroics, Archdeacon; you have rather less than an hour before your train leaves. Remember this is your first visitation to-day; you cannot plead your domestic troubles as an excuse for not fulfilling your duties," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest as Vera left the room.

"I have no intention of neglecting them. Where is Mark Brown? I wish to see him before I go," returned the Archdeacon coldly.

"I fear your wish will not be gratified. He is gone to the doctor to have the bullet extracted from his arm, and in all probability will not be home until the middle of the day."

This was not exactly true; Mark was gone to a neighbouring magistrate, with whom the Archdeacon was not on very good terms, to make a statement of what, according to him, had occurred the previous night, and to take out a summons against Vera for wounding him with intent to kill. It was possible he might pay the doctor a visit also, but that was not the primary motive he had for going out, as his mistress well knew. In fact he carried a letter of hers with him to the magistrate saying she feared Mark's statement was only too true.

"In that case I can do but little in the matter, beyond reporting the burglary to the police, until my return. I shall be home by four o'clock."

"If you take my advice you will make no report of any kind to the police, as I do not intend to prosecute anyone. The empty jewel-case has been found. It is possible the diamonds may turn up also some day. As I said last night, they are of very little consequence in comparison with Mark's assault, of which you appear to take no cognizance. If we could only prevail upon him to act as I am acting we might avert the disgrace and trouble which hangs over our heads like a sword," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, anxiously desiring to propitiate her husband and win him over to her opinion.

"I fail to see that any disgrace threatens us," said the Archdeacon, who was much puzzled by his wife's behaviour; for he could not help acknowledging to himself that in spite of her unchristian conduct in suspecting and accusing Vera of such crimes, she was acting very magnanimously in refusing to prosecute her when she believed her guilty. He was also much surprised that she took so little trouble to recover her diamonds, and appeared to bear the loss so philosophically, for they were worth a small fortune.

Now he disliked puzzles of any kind; they irritated him; perhaps for this reason he was not fond of women, for most women are enigmas, his wife a very complicated one. She piqued his curiosity

without satisfying it ; she baffled him ; she made him feel she was cleverer than he : and he began to dislike her. She perceived it, and straightway set herself to conquer his dislike. As he receded, she advanced. So long as he had been her devoted slave she had not cared for him ; while she was angling for him she had felt a keen interest, if nothing stronger, for him ; once she had landed him she became indifferent to him. But now that he showed signs of jumping back into the river and escaping from her, her love of sport revived, and she was anxious to regain her hold upon him.

From wishing to believe in Vera's guilt, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had found another step led her to actual belief, and that step had been taken during her interview with Mark that morning. She now firmly believed Mark's story ; and, to do her justice, she sympathised with her husband ; and if Vera could only be prevailed upon to give up Captain Raleigh and recall Mr. Hastings, she was quite willing to buy Mark's silence and hush up the whole matter.

She rose from her seat and moved towards the Archdeacon, who, however, shrank from her ; so, clasping her white hands in front of her, she stood still, and, looking affectionately at him, said in a reproachful voice :

"Ryot, this is a great trial ; I wish to be as kind as I can be in the matter, and I assure you, you have my deepest sympathy. Do not refuse my help, poor as it is."

The Archdeacon listened, and once again he thought he heard the voice of the charmer. Surely this was Mrs. Jamieson speaking, not his wife, whose voice he often dreaded since he had learnt its various inflections.

She saw her advantage and immediately followed it up by running her arm through one of his. Stooping down till her head rested on his shoulder, she proceeded to give her *coup-de-grâce*, as a sportsman will to a too-lively fish which threatens to jump from his basket.

"Ryot, dear, good may come out of this evil ; make Vera promise to give up Captain Raleigh and marry Mr. Hastings, and in return promise her nothing more shall be said on this matter. We will buy Mark's silence and hush it all up."

"My dear Poppy," interrupted the Archdeacon, before the actual blow was dealt, and his wife saw she was regaining ground rapidly. "My dear Poppy, there is, I am certain, nothing to hush up."

"Alas ! Ryot, it is all too true. Reuben Foreman is Vera's accomplice. He was with her in your study last evening, and Mark swears he saw her a few nights ago walking by the canal at the bottom of the drive with him in the middle of the night ; and last night Mark found my empty jewel-case in the tree close to which he had seen them standing."

This was her *coup-de-grâce*, but it was given in vain ; the blow missed its mark, her fish wriggled away from her.

"I don't believe a word of Mark's story. But I have no time to lose ; I must go at once and hear what Vera has to say," said the Archdeacon, as he disengaged himself from his wife, and hastily left the room.

Vera was impatiently awaiting her father in his study, her flushed cheeks and flashing eyes showing plainly enough how indignant she was at her step-mother's accusation, and the Archdeacon saw at a glance she was doing her utmost to control her anger.

"I have to leave home very shortly, my dear Vera ; so tell me, as briefly as you can, what happened last night," he said kindly.

"The worst of it is, papa, I know so little myself ; I went to bed and to sleep as usual, and I dreamt," began Vera.

"Never mind what you dreamt, my dear ; this is no time to talk of dreams," interrupted the Archdeacon.

"But that is the worst of it ; I don't know what was dream and what was reality," said Vera in a puzzled tone.

"What do you mean, Vera?" said the Archdeacon anxiously.

"I mean I must have been walking in my sleep last night, as I sometimes do."

"Walking in your sleep ! This is the first time I have heard of your doing such a thing."

"But it is not the first time I have done it, as Norah can tell you. I often did as a child, and I have done it twice since mamma died : last night and once before. On that occasion I found myself down by the canal when I woke. Last night the report of the pistol woke me, and I found myself in your dressing-room with Mark Brown lying wounded at my feet and the pistol on the floor between us, just as you came home."

"But how came you to be in my dressing-room?"

"Why, I dreamt someone was stealing Mrs. Tempest's diamonds, for Reuben Foreman had been here to warn me that Mark had been seen again with the man who tried to rob me; so I went to bed nervous about them. I heard a noise in the dressing-room in my sleep, and I got up in my dream and went in to see who was there. I saw in my dream the jewel-case gone and the window open. I seized the revolver to fire after the thief, and at the same moment Mark seized it also. Between us it went off, and the report woke me. I was dreadfully frightened and ran screaming for Norah to the top of the stairs, where you caught me."

"It is a very extraordinary affair, most extraordinary," said the Archdeacon.

"I hope you are not going to suspect me, papa," said Vera wearily, in a tone of despair.

"Certainly not, my dear child ; I believe you implicitly ; but I am afraid we may have some trouble in inducing your step-mother to do so. However, I will tell her your account is quite satisfactory before I start. When I come back this afternoon we must discuss the matter

more fully and see what is to be done. There is no doubt whatever that Mark is the culprit ; nevertheless, it is a very awkward matter ; very awkward indeed," repeated the Archdeacon nervously.

"I wish, papa, you would put off this visitation and stay at home ; I should like the matter cleared up as quickly as possible, and I should like to go to Uncle George at once. I cannot remain here unless Mrs. Tempest apologises for insulting me as she has done," said Vera.

"My dear, I must go to-day ; this is my first visitation, and I cannot well put it off ; I shall be home by four ; till then you can avoid your step-mother. Go out to luncheon, and on my return we will see what can be done. Mark is out now, so even if I had time I could not speak to him."

"Very well, papa," said Vera in a tone of resignation, for she could not bear the idea of being left alone with her step-mother after what had occurred. As long as her father was in the house she felt she had a protector, but as she watched him drive off her spirits fell, and a sense of loneliness and depression beyond anything she had ever felt crept over her, and a presentiment of coming evil which she could not shake off took possession of her.

That presentiment was not unfounded, for two hours after the Archdeacon had left the house, Mark Brown returned, accompanied by two policemen, one of whom was in plain clothes and carried a warrant for the arrest of Vera Ryot-Tempest, on a charge of maliciously wounding Mark Brown with intent to kill.

(To be continued.)



A ROMANCE OF THE CLOISTER.

BY MISS BETHAM-EDWARDS.

JUST outside the quaint little Franche-Comtois town of St. Aubin-aux-Ailes, nestled amid its vine-clad hills, stand the Protestant church and parsonage and the house of the cloistered Carmelites. As if symbolising the friendly, or at least, neutral attitude of two congregations, once at such deadly enmity, the straggling garden of the presbytery touched the walled-in recreation ground of the convent. The shouts of the pastor's children at play must often have reached the white-robed sisters as they took daily exercise ; but whilst from their loftier windows they could if so minded watch the movements of their neighbours, no eye, ever so curious, could penetrate the feminine Bastille to which a score-and-odd of human entities had voluntarily consigned themselves. Automatic figures in light draperies could be occasionally discerned amidst the foliage. That was all.

The little chapel attached to the convent was, however, accessible to the outer world. It stood within a few yards of the road, and the iron gate, fast locked and bolted at other times, was thrown open during mass and vespers. Stray worshippers and inquisitive idlers might then see the cloistered nuns, sitting mute as statues behind the iron screen that divided them from the rest. Were they young, withered, ecstatic or despairing? Who could tell? Service over, they hastily disappeared, as if glad to have the prison door closed upon them once more ; that brief reminder of a world to which they were dead again got over. Before the open church doors stretched the high road, the quietest imaginable ; yet the rural postman trudged by bearing glad and sorrowful news to the humblest home ; cheery peasants might be seen wending their way to market ; happy lovers sauntering arm-in-arm ; and, ever and anon, the white cloud of the distant railway speeding towards Paris or Geneva. And close at hand, too, lay St. Aubin ; a mere townling ; nothing to be called excitement stirring its quiet streets ; the daily routine of existence repeating itself with clock-like monotony throughout the year. But the roar of a modern Babylon, the near neighbourhood of Paris itself were hardly more contrasted with the death-in-life of the Carmelite convent.

I.

In the month of May, with an irony that could only escape the stray mystic or would-be Saint Theresa, this living tomb was turned into a fairyland of flowers. It is the month consecrated by the Catholic Church to the Virgin, when magnificent floral displays and costly musical services attract vast multitudes to the cathedral, and the

smallest church wears a festive look. Whilst the convents are decorated from end to end with garlands and enormous bouquets are placed under each image or portrait of Mary, it is on the chapels attached that the nuns now expend all their energies. The Carmelites of St. Aubin were celebrated for such shows, and from the first of May to the first of June the village folk flocked to their services.

On the eve of final preparation, just five years ago, a blue-bloused carpenter was still hammering away in the deserted interior, adding fresh-gathered exotics to the festoons adorning the high altar.

At the foot of his ladder stood two nuns, who handed him camelias and magnolias from time to time, giving directions. The pure spring twilight gradually faded, one basket of flowers was emptied after another, but the work went on.

"We need not wait any longer," at last said the elder of the two sisters wearily. "You quite understand what is to be done," she added, addressing herself to the workman.

"Quite, my sister," was the alert reply. He also was wearied, that poor carpenter; he had been at work since five o'clock in the morning and now longed to be rid of his monitresses in order to enjoy just a tiny cigarette under the organ-loft.

The pair of homely, florid, not discontented-looking women bustled off. They were lay sisters—that is to say, they were bound by no final vows—on whom, with others under the Superior's orders, devolved the domestic concerns of the convent. But the workman had hardly glanced round to assure himself that he was alone, when there crept forth from some hiding-place a timid, cowering creature whose features he could not distinguish in the gathering gloom.

Only a woman's voice at once betrayed the intruder and her errand. With a whispered word or two, no more, he was suddenly transported from his careless mood into a world of acutest suffering. A small, weak woman's world, it is true, but none the less real and moving. It was as if some poor hunted animal had found him out and was trying to make known a horrible story of persecution and despair.

"You are young, your face is kind," cried the suppliant, twining her thin, ice-cold fingers about his own. "Save me from dying over and over again before my hour is come, from curses that only blacken my own soul. Oh," she added with a suppressed wail, "this earth was not made for curses! I am sure of it. God did not create even the worm for suffering."

She glanced round fearfully, then gasped out under her breath:

"It must be to-night; my escape, I mean. Everyone is tired out and will sleep heavily. There is a moon. I can steal at midnight unobserved to the outer wall, by the roadside, just opposite the telegraph post. Place your ladder there, inside our garden; the trees and brushwood will make descent easy. Here is all I possess in the world; but never fear, my parents will reward you well."

She thrust into his reluctant palm something cold and smooth; then vanished as stealthily as she had come.

It was the universal stir and bustle of the floral preparations that had rendered such an interview possible. In preparation for the festival the vast congeries of buildings would be invariably cleaned, repaired and redecorated throughout. The iron screen shutting off the cloistered sisters from the body of the church was in its turn undergoing renovation, for the moment being unhinged and placed against the wall. Through this opening the frightened creature passed now. Lighting a match, the blue-bloused workman, so unexpectedly summoned to play the part of a Rinaldo, examined the pledge: a tiny crucifix of antique pattern, and, as far as he could judge, of solid gold.

"What does it matter?" he said to himself as he carelessly pocketed the trinket. "Gold or no gold, how can I refuse to help a woman in distress? And she has given me no choice, that is the simple truth. I would pay twenty francs to be well rid of the business."

He was quite a young man, and although wearing the blue blouse, without the rough exterior and unpolished manners usually associated with manual labour. His features were regular and beautiful, his form symmetrical and full of easy grace, his hands slender and well shaped. He wanted, too, the light-hearted gaiety characteristic of the French workman. He did not hum airs or whistle softly over his work, but rather seemed lost in reverie and pensive, questioning thought.

"It may prove a very awkward piece of work for me," he mused whilst hastily adjusting the last of the bouquets. "Now, if she had asked the Père Rouget, what would a squabble with the Superior be to him, a substantial man, independent of everybody? But the job must of course fall to a poor fellow without a sixpence, and alone in the world. Her parents will reward me well, she said. There is something in that. Who knows then? out of the scrape may arise a turn of good fortune. Be that as it may, help the poor thing I must. To draw back from a fellow creature in the hour of need? Never!"

His task done, he collected his tools, shouldered his ladder, and quitted the church. Just then the convent clock struck nine.

"Three hours good in which to make up my mind," he thought, having decided to undertake the championship, yet seeking a loophole for escape. The more and more he pondered, the more desperate seemed the enterprise. Nothing easier, certes, than for him to be at the appointed spot with a ladder. But how would she contrive to escape? A criminal condemned to the guillotine might as well try to elude his gaolers as a Carmelite sister to regain her freedom. So, at least, it seemed to him.

II.

THE night was calm and beautiful, yet a superstitious mind might have read evil augury in the heavy clouds veiling the moon from time to time, their dense, purple black masses so strangely contrasted with the piercing, silvery radiance. Never was moonlight more brilliant, never shadows more gloomy. Bodeful, too, sounded the shrill cries of the night owl flitting from tree to tree and the melancholy splash of the stream watering the convent gardens, now much swollen with spring rains. Nature seemed in a sobbing, waiting mood; even the breeze stirring the pine leaves sounded like a human sigh.

Between the outhouses and the wall stretched a vast drying ground, where fluttered newly-washed clothes hung out to dry; on the fruit bushes and shrubs also, with somewhat weird effect, lay long white garments. The timid might easily conjure up a world of ghosts here, the clothes taking grotesquely human forms as the night wind swayed them gently to and fro.

With a calculation and an ingenuity only called forth of despair, the fugitive had chosen for her purpose the one night of the year offering a combination of favourable circumstances. Not only was the entire household worn out with fatigue; not only did the process of house cleaning and renovation necessitate the opening of doors, otherwise barred and bolted; but the great spring washing, when the clothes remained out-of-doors all night, afforded an additional chance of escape.

Even were some vigilant eye upon the drying ground, amid the changing lights and shadows and the phantasmagoria of white spectres, as the long garments indeed looked, a stealthy figure could easily elude observation. And almost superhuman was the dexterity and absolute noiselessness with which this one had contrived to get so far, having safely stolen from the cell shared with a companion; fortunately for her the heaviest sleeper of the whole community. To glide through a newly white-washed corridor, every window of which stood wide open, to descend a side staircase appropriated to the use of the lay sisters, to boldly cross their dormitory, where all six lay snoring in company, take down from the door the key of the kitchen, thence enter the garden—all this seemed miraculous now it was done. But it had been done!

With beating heart she paused for a moment, at first too wildly thankful to go on, too passionately exultant to realise how much still remained to be accomplished. Murmuring a childish little prayer, raising her rosary to her lips, she crossed the drying-ground, taking care to hide herself between the rows of white linen. Timid as a hare with the pack at its heels, coursing as a fawn within near approach of its pursuers, her pulses afire and breath held close, she

hastened towards the meeting-place. In the lightning-like transit, for she flew rather than ran, a thousand apprehensions distracted her mind. The passage of the garden occupied a few minutes only, yet every instant of suspense seemed a long, weary hour, every step of the way a mile laboriously trodden, and with electric swiftness one agonised question arose after another. Would the counted-on deliverer indeed be there? Would the last, most hazardous feat be accomplished? And that horrible wall once surmounted, should she reach a haven of safety? The nearer her goal, the more delusive and chimerical seemed her hopes. Oh, no! Such over-joy could not, could not be!

The moon was suddenly hid as she reached the meeting place, and that blessed obscurity made the rest easy. Her trembling fingers felt the rungs of the ladder, a low whisper from above encouraged her to climb. Gently, yet firmly, she is then supported by one pair of arms, whilst by another the ladder is deftly lifted and re-adjusted for the descent. The three get down in safety and the light of a lantern now reveals to the sobbing, too thankful girl that her second deliverer is a woman.

"My landlady, the Mère Michon—Jeanne Marie," exclaimed the young man in a low voice. "I could not manage things alone, and she has a good heart. She pitied you! But quick! let us make haste to hide ourselves and form a plan."

The three hurried on for a few hundred yards, then struck into a by-road, where they soon reached a road-maker's hut, now dark and deserted. Behind stretched a pine wood in which cuttings had been made, and here, amidst the fallen trunks and chips, the rustic paladin concealed his ladder.

"Now, Jeanne Marie," he said, "you take the sister inside and change her clothes, whilst I keep watch. When you are ready, call me and we will consider what is best to do next."

"There! leave off crying and praying, my dear," cried the rough, warm-hearted peasant woman. "Elie has thought of everything. Here's my best Sunday gown, jacket and hood (you'll think of me when you get home, I know); put this basket on your arm. I packed in a bit of cheese, bread and some cherries to eat on the way. I'm a poor woman, you know, but I never yet did a kind deed without being rewarded twice over. Now, if anyone guesses that you are a nun and not Elie's sister or wife (no offence!) trudging with linen to market, it is no acuteness I'll credit them with, but just promptings of the evil one. Come in, Elie, lad; she is all ready."

"Where do your parents live?" he asked. "There is not a moment to lose."

"My name is de Grandial; my home is the Château Grandial, in the Morran," she replied, her wild exultation for a moment subdued, an expression even of pensiveness stealing over her face. "But who knows? Perhaps I have no longer father or mother living. We are

dead to those who love us when once the veil is taken. No message from without reaches that living tomb."

"Dear, dear! you belong to a great family then; but we might have guessed it from your speech. And all the cloistered sisters do. Ah! where their great dowries go to, who can tell us? Well, you won't forget Jeanne Marie, mademoiselle, I'm sure—and pardon the liberty I'm taking. Here's my smelling bottle in case you feel faint, and just open your mouth for a drop of cordial. You look for all the world like a ghost."

Meantime the young man pondered. When at last he spoke his plan was made out in every detail.

"'Tis a long way, anyhow, and we must take the longest."

He pulled out his purse and counted his little stock of money, two gold pieces and some silver.

"I have a Napoleon here; no harm in an extra coin or two; you'll repay me when you get back," put in Jeanne Marie. "And mademoiselle won't forget me."

"I think I have enough, but I'll borrow your twenty-franc piece. As I say, mademoiselle must not travel by railway or any public conveyance for fear of discovery. We shall have to trust to a lift when we can and do the rest on foot. It is fair-time at St. Bertrand, and Bernard, the butcher at the Maison Blanche (you know the hamlet a league off, Jeanne Marie?), will be starting between five and six o'clock. He will carry us so far if his cart is empty. Now, Jeanne-Marie, you go back; and next day if I am enquired for, say I have got a job of work a long way off. I had finished working at the convent and was paid, so no one will ask about me there."

"Poor lammie! May you get safe home, darling," cried the good woman, embracing the fugitive again and again. "Excuse me, mademoiselle; I feel to you as a mother might, and you have a feeling heart, I know. 'Tis little enough I can do for a fellow-creature in distress, but twenty francs are twenty francs, and many a bright gold piece earned in my youth has gone to others never more to return. The gown and the stockings are brand new, dear; never yet put on. But you won't forget."

"Adieu, Mère Michon, adieu," broke in the young man impatiently. "Be wary; keep your mouth shut."

The girl whispered inarticulate thanks and blessings; then they parted; Jeanne Marie trudging back to the village, the pair making the best of their way through the pine wood.

"It is very lonely here, but there is nothing to be afraid of," the young man said; "and the dawn will soon break. Our way will seem shorter when we can look about us."

"Oh, I fear nothing—with you," was the passionately grateful reply. "You are strong, you have a commanding voice, you would never let me be forced back to the convent."

"Make your mind easy," he said lightly; then, as if to beguile the

tedium of the road, he whistled in perfect time one simple air after another. By and by the sweet, bird-like notes ceased and both plodded on without a word.

They had enough to think about. "Who can tell," reflected Elie. "Dame Fortune may at last have rapped at the door of the foundling, the nobody's son, the castaway. I have done my best to rise in the world, but it is hard when you have no friends, no money, no name even to start with. This rich man will surely befriend his daughter's deliverer. Who knows? Perhaps he will help me to Algérie, where I might make a man of myself."

His companion's thoughts were far less clear and connected. Life, that is life indeed, was coming back slowly to her as to a prisoner after long incarceration. One by one, dulled senses reasserting themselves; long-stifled volitions making themselves felt within her breast. Eight years of the cloister had turned her into a living, breathing automaton—a human machine. Three hours of life sufficed to recall the sympathetic creature—the woman.

Gradually the pure, pale light showed the lofty pine tops; twitterings of countless birds, lauds of the woodland, greeted the dawn. Soon the sweet spring landscape lay before them, fresh and bright as in a picture. Emerging from the wood they beheld emerald green Alp and pasturing herds; perched here and there a rustic chalet, the cheese-maker's home in summer. Below, a scattered hamlet, amid cornfields and vineyards; and far away, crest upon crest of undulating forest—the pine-clad peaks of the Jura.

III

THE sun was high when Etiennette de Grandial—such was the real name of Sister Pauline—awoke from a long, heavy, dreamless sleep. What had befallen her? Where was she?

The night's adventure now came back. The flight from the convent; the tramp with her sturdy champion through the pine-wood; the butcher's cart in which she had lain down to rest. They must have arrived long ago, for the sun now shone due south and the drive was to have lasted three hours only. She half rose from the heap of fresh straw and glanced around. The cart had been drawn under a tree for coolness and quiet at some little distance from the other vehicles. Dozens were there, whilst immediately about the inn all was bustle and excitement. Far adown the street she saw above the housetops an ancient cathedral tower, and close under its walls a dazzling, bewildering scene—flags flying, glittering toy-booths and tents, with streams of country folk keeping holiday. Strains of merry music and a joyous hum of voices reached her ear. For a while she gazed blankly, a weight oppressing her heart. She seemed to have burst the cerements of the grave, to have quitted wraiths and shadows for this living, moving company. Should she ever feel one

of them again? The presence of her companion broke the spell. That honest, kindly glance, that helpful, decided voice, humanised her, made her feel herself, a being not only sympathised with but sympathetic.

"I have breakfasted long ago ; you had better come indoors and eat something too," he said ; "then we must be on the move again."

He helped her to get down, not in the least understanding her wistful looks. Again and again she glanced towards the fair, began to speak, and stopped short.

"Have no fear," he whispered, "no one is on your track here. This is the last place that would be suspected."

"I was not thinking of that," she said, a faint blush overspreading her thin, sallow cheeks, "but of yonder booths. Might I just walk through them—not to purchase anything, of course—but merely to look on? It is ten years now since I saw a street or a shop window."

He smiled down pityingly, almost loftily, this blue-bloused peasant, called upon to champion the daughter of an ancient house. The naïveté of the speech made him sensible of the difference between them. They were perhaps nearly of an age, but whilst he was a man she had remained in many things a child. The part of protector banished the wider difference of rank ; dignity is an essential characteristic of the French peasant ; but, although friendly and brother-like in his solicitude, he was not in the least familiar.

Nodding alert assent, he led her towards fairyland—such, indeed, it seemed to the dazed, enraptured girl. Eagerly, as the recovered from years of sickness or restored to sight after a long term of blindness, she glanced hither and thither. Now a stall of feminine gew-gaws fascinated her gaze, rainbow-coloured ribbons, trinkets of artificial topaz, sapphire and emerald, so marvellously imitating real gems, kerchiefs of pillow-lace. Now she stood spell-bound before a display of local dainties ; Dijon gingerbread tied up in gold paper and bright ribbon, sugar-plums from Flavigny, candied fruits from Auvergne. Here were bagatelles for a maiden's chamber : hand-mirrors, embroidered housewives, pin-cushions of painted velvet, flower-stands, pictures. There glittered glass and porcelain, or those pretty trifles, not useless because they are pretty, known as the "articles de Paris."

"Let me offer you something," the young man said quite naturally. It were surely wanting in good manners not to present his companion with a fairing. Without waiting for consent, and following the direction of her eyes, he immediately fastened upon a pair of delicately perfumed gloves, knitted in fine lavender-coloured silk with fancy borders and tiny silken tassels.

As the gift was placed in her hands, the girl smiled joyously, and that smile, revealing as it did two dimples and small, exquisitely formed teeth, white as ivory, utterly transformed the pale face. Hitherto observers would have set her down as positively ugly,

extreme wanness and rigidity and that acquired habit of expressionless impassibility repelling rather than attracting the gazer.

But what will not a smile and a glow of grateful, affectionate happiness effect in any woman's looks? As the young peasant waited whilst she fitted the gloves to her small, slender hands, a slight blush deepened his sunburnt complexion. Those little hands reminded him that she was gently born, the dimples revealed the fact that, if not exactly beautiful, she was very sweet to look upon. And naturally enough under the circumstances, the more openly she expressed her gratitude and regard, the more studiously he avoided anything like indiscretion.

Still they could not trudge on mile after mile in silence. A certain candid intimacy must spring up, whether they would or no.

Elie would forget the formal "*Mademoiselle*," *Etiennette* the "*Monsieur*" with which a high-born French lady addresses a peasant in these days. Although for the most part their talk was of very serious things, little outbursts of gaiety on her part, a grave playfulness on his, lent their confidences a sweetness and endearingness new to both. They were hardly friends; yet with all the enthusiasm of lovers each poured into the other's ear the story of a life.

"What made you unhappy at the convent?" he asked. "Was anyone unkind to you?"

"I blame no one except myself," was the vehement reply. "How could I for a moment believe that I was fitted for sainthood, martyrdom? But the least alleviation, a little freedom, a glimpse of joy, would have enabled me to endure to the end. The lay sisters seemed to me too happy: they were busy, they were free, they had friends. Oh! to live from day to day without hope, to be alive, yet lonely as if already in the tomb; to feel one's brain growing duller and duller with the pain of inanition; one's heart growing stony cold, and the exaltation, the fervour, the communion with Heaven, once aspired to and believed in, a mere delusion, a hollow mockery! Promise me one thing," she cried, turning upon him in an agony of supplication. "You will not let me be forced back to that living grave? You will kill me first?"

"I promise. Here is my hand upon it," he said; and for a little the pair walked hand-in-hand, that close grip of his large, strong fingers reassuring her.

"I wish you were not a workman, that you could always be my friend. I mean that we could often see each other and chat as we are doing now," she began. "But I shall never forget how you have stood by me—never, never. And my parents are rich, they will repay you. Father, mother—these names I was bidden to forget in the cloister—do you know that your own *Etiennette* is on her way home?"

"Don't cry, my child," the young man put in, kindly reproachful.

"My tears are tears of joy. For they will, they *must* be glad. Yet

is it not strange that parents can so give up their children? It all comes back to me as if happening yesterday. Robed in bridal white, myrtle blossoms in my hair, veiled and gloved, I stood at the grating, myself calm as we made our adieux, all the rest weeping, my poor old Alsatian nurse, Lisbeth, sobbing as if her heart would break. But even that did not move me. I felt so sure in thus breaking every natural tie, trampling underground every natural feeling, that I was fulfilling a Heaven-sent mission; answering—oh! the irony, yes, I can say it to you, the blasphemy of the phrase—a Divine call.”

She turned towards him, her pathetic eyes still wet with tears, no reserve possible in this sudden outburst of long pent-up emotions.

“Better far become a peasant’s wife, share the burdens of daily life with an honest man like yourself than be doomed to such a fate. But do not let me talk of it any more. Put other thoughts into my head.”

Distractions were not wanting. The long glad day seemed almost interminable, each hour of blissful experiences, many rolled into one.

How fair showed this Jura world in early summer. Against the turquoise sky rose ridge upon ridge of bright green larch trees; between the narrow combes or close-shut valleys trended many a crystal stream; whenever they rested in sunny glade, Etiennette made sweet Alpine posies, the small purple clematis, the lily of the valley, the sky-blue hepatica carpeting the way. If they overtook a timber cart, the good-natured mountaineers offered them a seat, themselves afoot always as they guided their team round the sharp precipices. Or a trader bent upon purchasing local wares, spectacles at Morey, tops and pipe handles at St. Claude, would take them upon his light cart, shortening for them many a mile. Etiennette’s gentleness and look of fragility, Elie’s chivalrous care of her, won the sympathy of all.

“The lass is weary and very pale; will she have a drink of wine?” said one.

“Here, my girl,” said another filling her hands with ripe cherries, “try and put them in your cheeks.”

Little kindnesses and courtesies were thus showered upon them as they went. When night came they were far away from the cloister, but farther still from their destination. They rested at a little wayside inn on the borders of a pine-forest, beyond that dark rim the shining, silvery peak of Mont Blanc.

IV.

TOWARDS evening on the fourth day of their travels, the Château Grandial was indeed reached. Etiennette’s cheeks flushed with pride as they came in sight of the lordly pile towering over a province. Crowning an eminence, its terraces commanded a view of the entire Morran—granite peaks, dimpled valleys, curling rivers, smiling hamlets, all lay outspread as in a map. This perfect specimen of mediæval architecture, not debased for feudal purposes, a nobleman’s

palace but no prison, had suffered little from time, war or change. Perhaps the early founders of the noble house of Grandial, could they emerge from the tomb, would find as little moral change, their descendants holding the same beliefs, the same faith, the same prejudices as themselves.

From the porter's lodge a carriage road swept upward through the park. The gates stood wide, and, unperceived, the pair now passed in.

"I am surely expected," Etiennette whispered, "otherwise the park would be closed. And see, a tent is spread on the lawn, servants are bustling about, a banquet is prepared. Yes, it must be so; these rejoicings are for me. But we will steal into the house, escaping notice; I long to weep on my mother's breast."

The tent had been erected at some distance from the principal entrance, and the servants busied in festive preparations did not observe the strangers. The stalwart blue-bloused peasant and his slight companion as they now hurried along the broad carriage road were, moreover, no figures to arouse suspicion. Elie's erect carriage and frank, engaging face would bespeak confidence anywhere. Etiennette's coarse print gown, short black jacket and white coiffe could not conceal a certain look of distinction. Four days of hope, of life indeed, not its woeful parody, had wonderfully transformed her. The cheeks so daintily dimpled glowed with health, the tender blue eyes shone with quiet happiness, the steps of the slender feet were elastic.

Unhindered, unobserved, they crossed the threshold, Etiennette leading the way, her protector following, bareheaded. Airily as a fawn she bounded forward, her lips parted in exultant smile, her arms outspread, the very embodiment of rapturous expectation. They were now in the open doorway of the magnificent reception room, where stood a tall, dignified, white-haired gentleman in evening dress.

"Father," she gasped out, utterly mastered by over-joy. "It is I, your long-lost child, your own Etiennette."

The figure thus appealed to remained rigid as if cut out of marble. Without stirring an inch, without moving a muscle, the master of the house glanced from the tearful, breathless, rosy-red suppliant to her companion. Had the pathetic appeal been a masquerade, a mere piece of acting, he could not have looked on more icily.

"Unhappy girl," he said. "The first renegade of your family, the first to bring shame on our honoured house! What penitence can now reconcile you with an outraged church, what tears of agony wipe out the stain? Go back to the convent. Seek the divine pardon and peace of mind in bitterest expiation——"

Just then, ere yet the words had utterly paralysed the listener, a rustle of silken skirts was heard on the staircase. One low-breathed, passionate word only escaped Etiennette's lips—"Mother." Once

more she moved forward as if expecting an embrace, again to draw back. This lady dressed like a bride in rich white satin, occupying the mistress's place, was hardly older than herself. Her father then had become a widower; had married again.

"Be thankful that your mother has been spared this shame," the old man added. "She went to her rest fondly assuring herself of her child's pure intercessions. I attempt no force, remember; you are free to choose between the only safe and honourable asylum open to you, or—beggary. A man cannot dower his daughter twice, cannot receive under his roof a renegade, a perjurer."

He glanced suspiciously at the sad, dignified figure beside the shrinking girl.

"And you, young sir," was the scathing reproof. "Search in your own conscience for the meed of such services. Ask yourself what recompense should await the palterer with the most solemn ordinances, the calculating sacrilegist bent upon gain. I have no more to say."

With a haughty wave of the hand he dismissed them, and but just in time.

Already the guests bidden to welcome home bride and bridegroom had begun to arrive. As the dazed, sorrow-stricken pair now retraced their steps, they met carriage after carriage bearing visitors to the Château in gala dress. What a contrast was presented by these gay, careless new-comers and the castaways passing out! On entering the park a few minutes before, Etiennette had recalled a dozen familiar features with a transport of recognition. The beautiful home had seemed her own once more. Now, turned like a beggar from her father's doors, she walked with downcast eyes and white face, never looking back.

When they were on the high road, Elie bade her sit down, and opened his wallet. "Let us rest awhile, let us eat something," he said, with affected cheerfulness. Truth to tell, the blow had fallen no less crushingly on himself. Might not this escapade, as it seemed momentarily to him, prove his ruin? He possessed nothing but his good name, the name of an honest workman. That, he felt he had jeopardised past help. He could not return home in search of employment. Whither, then, should he bend his steps?

But good feeling, a sense of protectiveness, and manly self reliance soon get the better of these dreary thoughts. And bitter as was his disappointment, affectionate as was his participation of her own, he felt glad that their intercourse had not yet come to an end. This friendship with a gentle, clinging, sensitive woman was the first real intimacy of his life.

"Come," he urged, trying to make her smile through her tears: "If we are not invited to a banquet, we have at least the remains of our breakfast. Just a morsel of bread and a sip of wine, to please me!"

"Not yet ; my tears would choke me if I tried to swallow," she said. "I have, then, no father ; hearts are turned to stone outside the convent walls. But it is not so much for myself I grieve. I can earn my bread as other women do ; I have not forgotten the little I learned at school. But, oh, it will be long, long before I can repay your sacrifices. And that good peasant woman whose very clothes I wear !"

"I have your cross still ; if of pure gold it will bring you money for pressing needs," he said. "And I will see what I have left of my own. Could I get to Paris ——"

"You will not leave me—at least, not yet ?" she cried, clinging to him, refusing to take back her trinket. "If left to myself, who knows, perhaps want would drive me back to the cloister ?"

Just then, when with despondency at heart each was trying to cheer and soothe the other, the bent figure of an ancient woman hobbled up. She was dressed in the Alsatian costume : bright kerchief, white stomacher, black skirt bordered with green, and an enormous knot of broad black ribbon surmounting the small, yellow, wrinkled face.

"Don't look at me ; don't speak to me, child ; it would break my heart," she said, standing over the amazed girl. "You must remember your nurse, your old Lisbeth. Ah ! I went on my knees, begging you not to take the veil ; and the death-knell that sounded over you was a death-knell to me. I had no one to love me when my bright Etiennette was shut up in the cloister, dead, buried ; dead and buried, so she seemed."

She fumbled at her pocket and brought out a reticule of antique stamped velvet with a silver clasp.

"Look you, darling," she whispered as she leaned on her stick, "I shall have a soft bed to lie on, dainties to eat as long as I live ; and when I am dead, never fear, masses in plenty will be said for Lisbeth's soul. But my master has wedded a young wife ; my hoardings shall never go to the child of a stranger. Here, my heart's love, hide it quickly. The bag holds five thousand francs as I live ! a little dowry for you. No, don't kiss me ; don't let me hear your sweet voice. I am too old to cry. We have parted—but there's the money."

"And whose should it be but yours ?" said Etiennette when she had done weeping. "My true, now my only friend, poorly are you repaid even thus."

She thrust the treasure into his unwilling fingers, but it was long before he could stammer out a word of thanks. To the ingenuous mind of the young peasant Lisbeth's gift was nothing short of downright fortune. With five thousand francs a wary man could start as a colonist in Algeria, or for the matter of that, set up as a market-gardener or dairy-farmer in France. Five thousand francs would make a man of him anywhere.

But another conviction sent the blush to his manly brow and made his heart beat quickly. He was a poor man no longer and his companion was no longer a great lady.

"Etiennette," he began at last, his strong, rich voice trembling with emotion, "you are alone in the world, may I not now be your friend? How could I tell you my secret thoughts before? You were an heiress about to re-enter the world, I a poor unlettered workman, earning my bread from day to day. But we are both orphans, outcasts together. I can speak unashamed and you are free to listen."

He clasped her slender hands in his, drew her nearer to him and whispered, "This wayfaring life of the last few days, has it not been sweet to you as to me? Ah! I have surely guessed aright, though you will not say so. Our bitter disappointment has turned to deepest joy."

She clung closer to him, but the stammering lips got out no word, the tenderly pathetic eyes refused to meet his own. Yes, to her also these wanderings had been a revelation; she understood it all now. She loved too; she, too, was rich indeed. "Never fear," added the shy yet dignified lover, "that you shall feel ashamed of your husband, unlettered rustic though he be. And your white hands shall not be roughened with toil. We will go to Algeria, and take the good Jeanne Marie with us. You shall reign mistress of a dainty home."

With one passionate sentence only she interrupted these fond speeches.

"Give me straw to lie on, dry bread to eat," she cried, "only let me be free, let me be loved! And the prayer is not mine alone but one of many, uttered alas in vain. I should be too happy were it not for thoughts of my fellow victims left behind."

So that very night they took train to Marseilles, where Jeanne Marie joined them, and in a few years no settlers were more prosperous than the pair whose strange but true story has just been told.



IN SUNNY CLIMES.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS
FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.

WE left the Eternal City, with all its dreams and visions, behind us one fair morning. It had been a short but intensely interesting visit. Mauleverer, by the charm of his eloquence and his familiarity with the subject, had rendered our days memorable. That so practical a mind should so frequently lapse into the highest strains of romantic and poetic fervour was only another instance of the singular contradictions that nature delights in. He also largely possessed that attribute of responsiveness, which is the true seal to friendship. And this forms one of the highest pleasures of life. Man was not born to be alone. Companionship is necessary even in our most absorbing moments ; even amidst the loveliest scenes of nature, the highest productions of art. As Scott says :

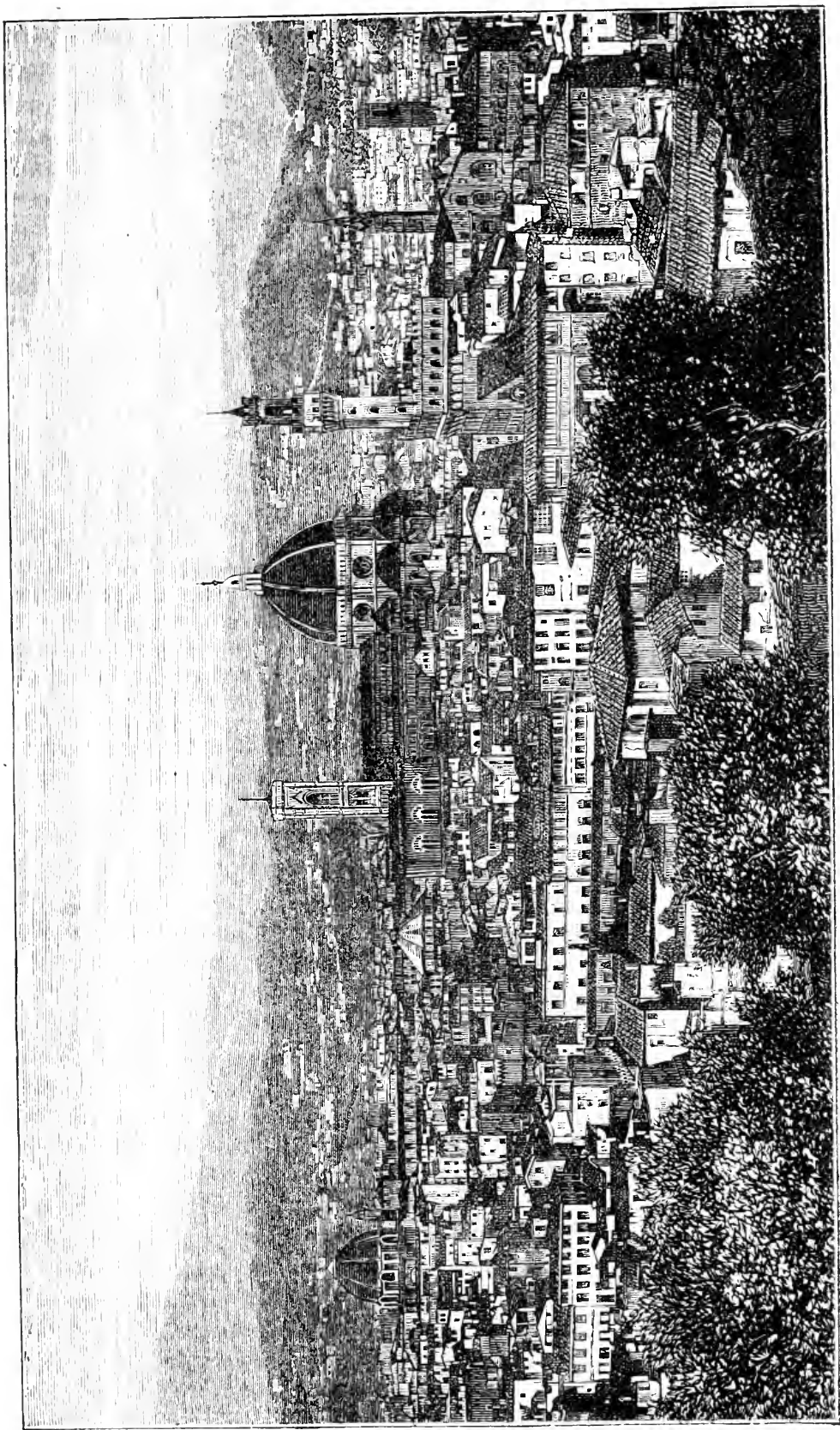
"It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind."

Friendship brings out the heart's best impulses, widens one's sympathies and views of life, keeps the thoughts and feelings fresh and green, brightens our skies and sunshine.

In Rome our life had been a strange mixture of the real and the ideal, of fact and fancy, of past and present. For the Eternal City is a law unto itself, giving out its own impressions, weaving its own meshes and casting its own spells ; working its own will upon the mind of him who dares boldly to intrude upon this record of the centuries, this silent witness of the ages, "where all the air a solemn stillness holds:" the stillness of death and decay ; sad witness to the fact that Time passes "flying on mighty pinions," and that each one bears within him the burden of the Eastern proverb : "This also shall pass away."

So we left Rome with emotions of sorrow and regret, and turned our faces towards Florence.

It was evening when we reached the famous city and twilight was beginning to veil the town. The last time I had entered the station was at six o'clock one winter's morning. It was bitterly cold. A cutting wind was blowing ; snow lay upon the distant hills. I had been travelling all night, and one knows what that means in Italy. Uncomfortable carriages, hard cushions, a jolting, rattling train. This through the night. And in the morning stiffened limbs and aching heads. The porters had cried out "Firenze ! Firenze !" and thrown



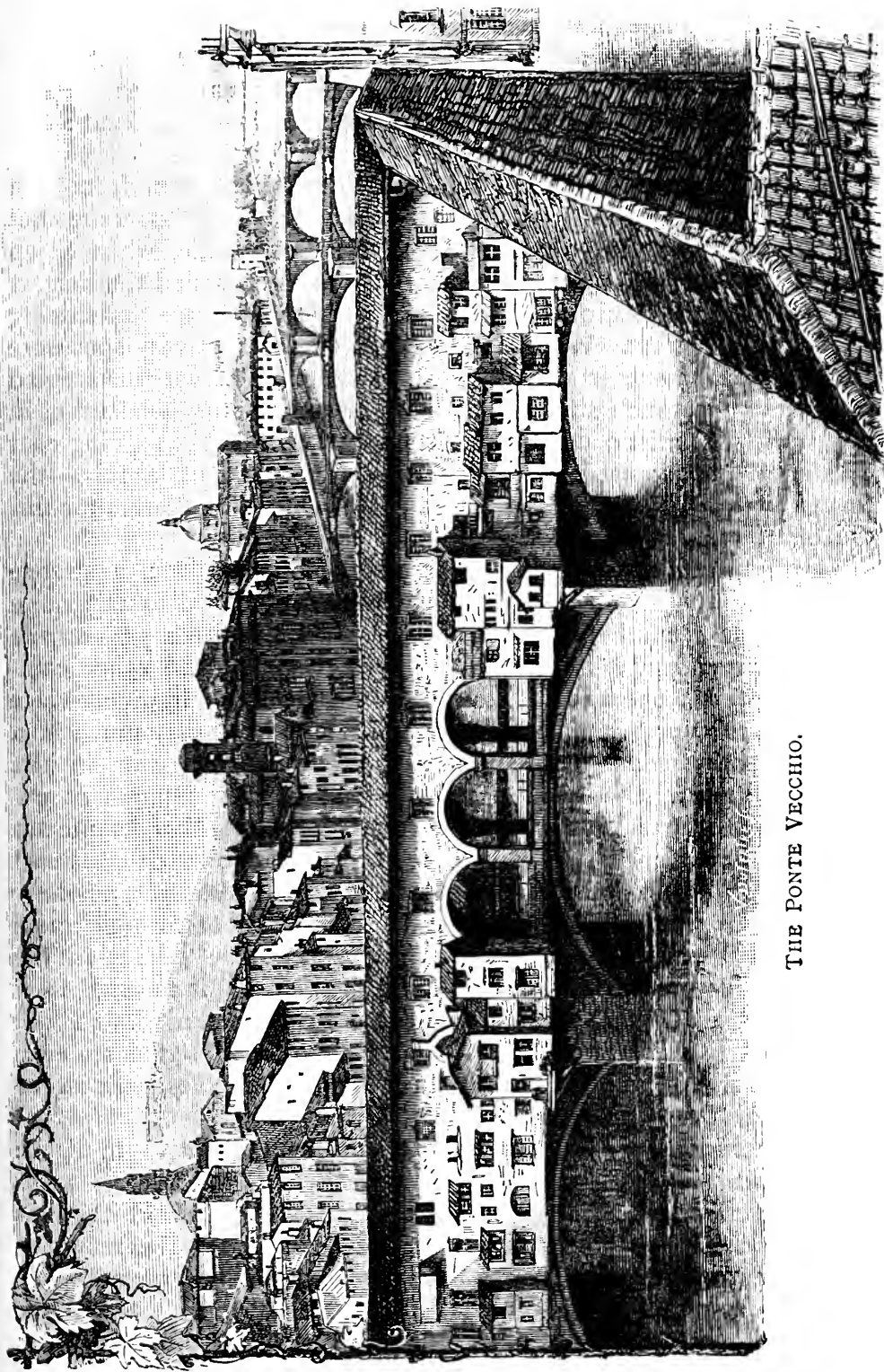
FLORENCE.

wide the doors, but the refreshment rooms were barred and bolted, and coffee was not forthcoming even for a king's ransom. This the fair city of flowers with its balmy air and genial skies? I had never felt anything more cruelly cold in the most Northern latitudes.

But on the evening of which I now write all was different. The skies were bright and beautiful. The far-off hills were guiltless of snow. The heat was intense. The omnibus of the Hotel de la Paix was in waiting, and we were soon rattling through the streets of the Fair City. We had it to ourselves, for no other travellers had alighted for the hotel which is the best in Florence, and, be it said, one of the most expensive in Italy : exorbitant in some of its charges. But its situation is good. From our windows we could watch the flowing Arno, separated from us only by the road. Lower down was the wonderful Ponte Vecchio with its quaint old houses and lovely old shops, where a perfect blaze of turquoise, coral and other temptations await the traveller.

But what a change from the city we had recently left ! This was another world, and Florence with all its charm seemed almost tame and commonplace in comparison with the influences of the Eternal City. These comparisons of course should never be drawn ; places, like people, should stand on their own merits, be judged by their own individuality ; but in these days of rapid transition it is impossible to avoid comparisons. Before one influence has had time to fade into the background you are thrown violently upon another. Travelling rapidly from place to place is something like reading a collection of short stories. You no sooner grow interested than the break and the end come ; you have to turn the page and begin again. The true charm lies in the long story, and the true delight in the long sojourn. In the one case you close the book, having made a new set of friends which are yours for ever ; and in the other you have laid up in store scenes and spots with which you have grown intimate and familiar, and in the archives of memory they also are yours for ever. An endless picture-gallery, to be called up at will, at all times and in all seasons ; in broad sunlight, or in night's darkest and most silent hours.

We had a proof of it that night. We went out upon the quay when the stars were shining and a glorious planet cast her reflection upon the still, dark waters of the Arno. We leaned over the stone parapet and watched the stream, and the heavens so clearly reflected upon its surface. Upon the narrow stone copings men were here and there stretched at full length, fast asleep. How they could do it was a marvel. The slightest push, and over they would have rolled. The least stir in their slumber, and it seemed as if nothing could save them from a plunge and a splash into the river, flowing far below : a plunge and a splash, and, for all one knew, a speedy death. It may be that life had no charms for them, and they were indifferent whether death came or not ; and so, with the irony of fate, they



THE PONTE VECCHIO.

might boldly do and dare anything ; death would keep away. Their bed was certainly not one of rose leaves. They might with truth say that "their lines were cast in hard places." I wondered whether they remained there all night, and if so, how they felt when they woke in the morning. But we did not question them. Let sleeping dogs lie is a proverb that may safely be extended to human kind : and especially to Italian human kind.

We gazed upon the quiet waters. The city lay around, its hum and din hushed in the gradual repose of night. The Hours are not all laughing and dancing. There is the darker side, when Sleep reigns ; Sleep, the brother of Death. Before us stretched the heights of S. Miniato, of Fiesole. Lights gleamed about like stars shining out of the darkness. Within a small radius of this very spot were priceless monuments, countless treasures of art. The very air seemed to breathe out much that was famous in past history—beautiful in the world of artistic creation. One felt the influence stealing over one subtly as spreading incense or the perfume of a rose—the flower for which Florence is famous. The Queen of flowers for this Queen of cities : like unto like.

Mauleverer was silent and apparently contemplative ; a strange thing for him when we were together, for the one loved to talk quite as much as the other loved to listen. In this, perhaps, was the "secret sympathy." The one mind was receptive, the other communicative ; the one was reflective, the other delighted in giving voice to instant impressions and emotions. The one lived very much in a world of dreams and contemplations, the other was ever in the present moment, the passing scene. The latter temperament undoubtedly extracts most pleasure from life ; most *lives* its life ; is most full of action. The other case may have its own delights and advantages ; deeper and more lasting thoughts and pleasures, possibly ; but there is a danger of wasting time in visions ; of forming great plans and magnificent schemes that will prove mere castles in the air ; of passing into a passive condition in which life is reduced to a theory and many sins of omission have to be recorded. Yet it is well to have all phases of life and character to strike an even balance in the world ; the round and the square holes must all be filled by their respective tenants.

Mauleverer, I have said, was silent and contemplative to-night : and I wondered.

"Of what are you thinking ?" I presently asked, afraid that his temperament was taking a turn and developing into the reflective mood. And that would never have done. Imagine two reflective moods going about the world together as sober and lively as owls at midday : growing tired of each other's "unuttered thoughts" and falling into suicidal frames of mind. You may be wise as Solon and witty as King Charles of frivolous memory, but if you keep it all to yourself, you may just as well have been born with a narrower intel-

lect. It is useless to keep a current account at your banker's if you never draw cheques upon it.

"Of what are you thinking, Mauleverer?" I reiterated, not receiving an immediate reply to my first question.

"Of the flight of time," was his somewhat enigmatical reply. "Of the power of memory, which enables us to store so much in these small heads of ours. It is just twenty years," he continued, "since I, a little fellow of ten, stood on this very spot, watching 'the river flowing to the sea.' My father and mother were with me; realities for me had not begun. The world seemed boundless; life, if I thought of it at all, an eternity. It appears hardly more than yesterday, yet all things are changed. Those dear ones have gone, as you know; how dear they were, you also know. And I begin to realise that youth passes quickly, and life is by no means an eternity. Twenty years have flown as a dream. This old river runs on for ever, like Tennyson's Brook, but men must come and men must go. Twenty years hence, you and I, shall we be standing here together?"

I was amazed. So even Mauleverer occasionally had his moods which bordered on the romantic and the sentimental. Probably more often than he cared to confess. Perhaps even a great deal of his declared warfare against romance was assumed. And we may assume things until they almost become realities.

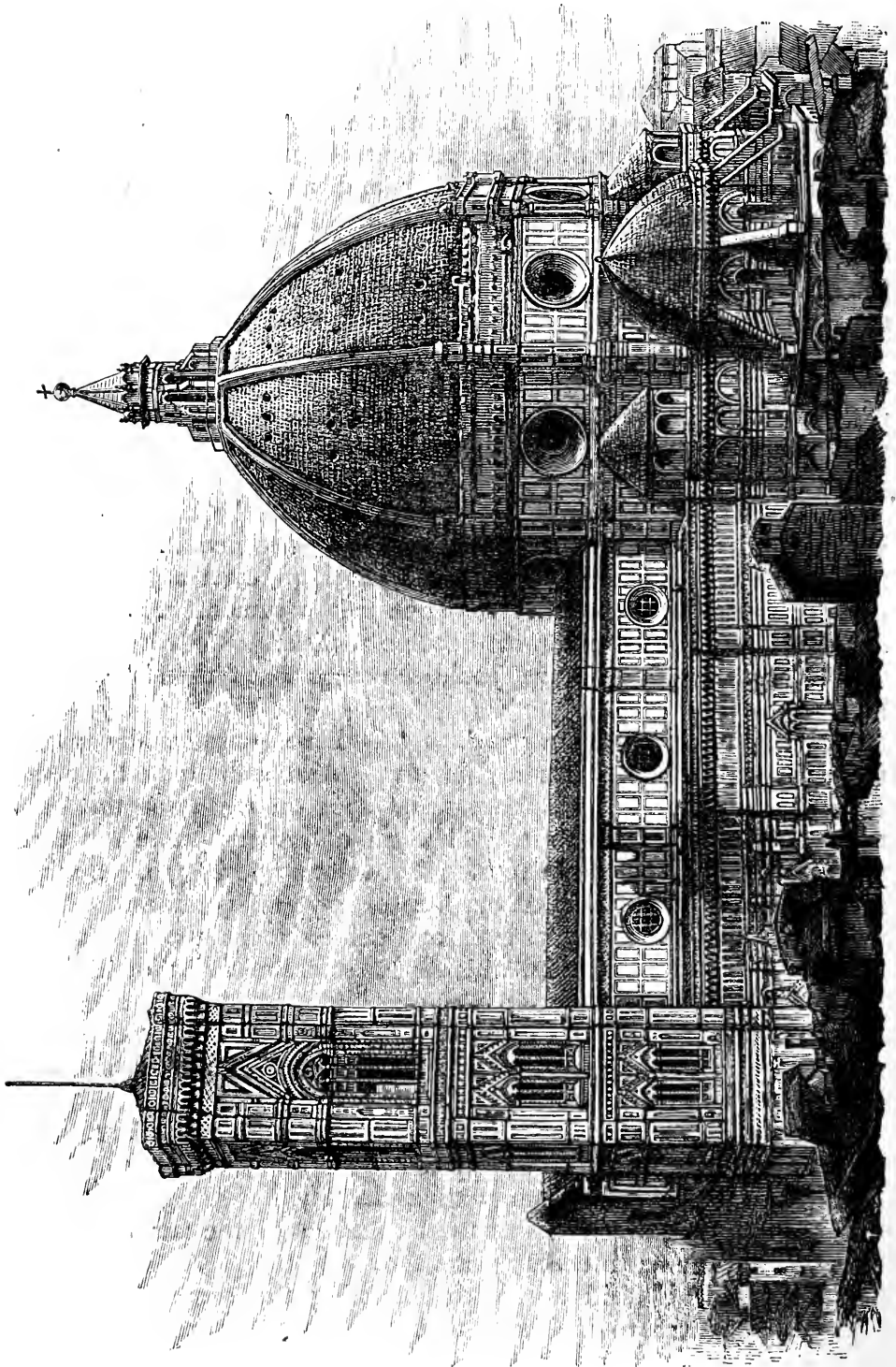
"How many times have you been here since then?" I asked him.

"Never once," he answered. "I have occasionally passed through, but generally with my parents. And something happened here which made Florence the saddest spot on earth for them and they could never return to it. I had an only sister. She was three years younger than I, and she died here twenty years ago. She was nothing less than an angel on earth in beauty and goodness. A fair sweet child with large violet eyes and golden locks that fluttered in the breeze, and a face in which you saw the mark of Heaven. 'Those whom the Gods love die young,'" quoted Mauleverer, smiling and looking outwards with eyes that shone suspiciously. "She came from heaven; the angels could not do without her, and so she went quickly back to them."

There was a long silence. The night was dark and silent. The river flowed beneath us. The stars flashed and scintillated. Mauleverer was looking at them with a dreamy, far-off gaze, perhaps wondering if one of them was the habitation of the fair little spirit that had left the earth twenty years ago.

"Better so," I said at length, breaking the somewhat painful silence. "Better to die in all that beauty and innocence, than live to learn that the world is less fair than it seems; that sin reigns, and fate is cruel, and life is nothing but a phantom chase, a long series of disillusion. So we each have a tomb in a foreign land; each a

little guardian angel to watch over us and perhaps save us from some of life's temptations."

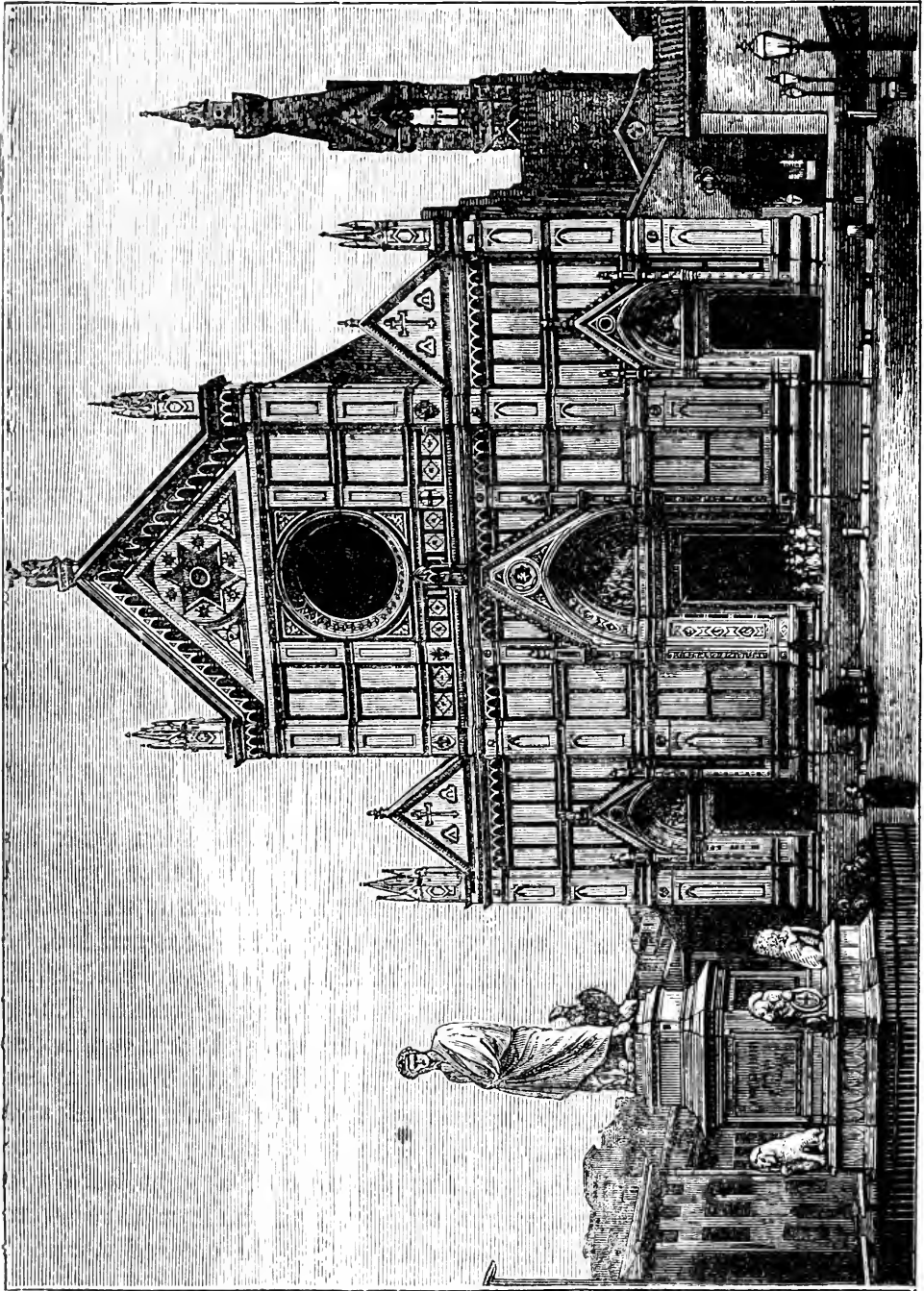


THE CATHEDRAL, FLORENCE.

"What must they think of us if they can look down and see into our hearts!" cried Mauleverer. "Would not their celestial good-

ness and purity shrink back affrighted, and wander off in search of better worlds and higher beings ? ”

“ On the contrary. They would remember that we are only mortal,



SANTA CROCE.

and being so can only be imperfect. We prove our humanity by erring, they their divinity by forgiving.”

“ To-morrow we will go up to the cemetery,” he said. “ People staying here from time to time have told us that the little tomb

is always in perfect order ; that roses bloom and perfume the air above the spot of one who was sweeter and fairer than the rose, purer than the lily. How well I remember her lovely face, and her graceful, child-like form.—But a truce to sentiment and sad recollections," he cried abruptly. "We shall all go in turn through that dark, mysterious valley, take that awful unknown journey. Let us come back to the present."

And at that very moment an incident occurred which put all our sentiment to flight and brought us sharply back to earth and the present time. What I had fancied might happen did happen. One of the sleeping figures, not twenty yards from us, must have rolled over. We heard a great splash and plunge into the water below. The surface grew agitated, and in a minute a dark form was striking out for the neighbouring steps. Luckily he could swim, and was quite a boy, and when he came up to terra firma, looking like a drowned rat and shivering as if it were mid winter and snow lay on the hills and an east wind blew chillingly, he seemed none the worse for the adventure.

There had been a shout when he fell, and two of our waiters at the door of the hotel had run over to see what had happened.

"I have been here ten years, sir, and never saw that before," said one of them to us. "They sleep on the edge of the precipice, but they never roll over."

"How is it?" asked Mauleverer. "People turn in bed, why do these men not turn upon the wall? Half a turn would be quite enough to send them down."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders with the expressiveness only known to foreigners.

"I don't know, sir. The French say, '*Il y a un Dieu pour les enfants et les ivrognes.*' I suppose there is a Providence over all careless people. The Holy Virgin is good and Heaven is watchful," he added, crossing himself. And going up to the half-drowned lad, he asked him how he came to roll over and take an involuntary cold bath.

We did not stay for the answer, but passing down the Lung' Arno, followed the course of the bending stream. It was a glorious night, and the stars flashed and scintillated in the dark blue heavens. The town was hushed in repose, and we had the whole broad and beautiful thoroughfare to ourselves. The surrounding heights were dark and shadowy. Nothing but the gleaming of a light here and there betrayed that humanity was stirring, and human lives were running their little race "until the evening." We crossed a bridge and went up the heights, and the town lay at our feet ; a dark impenetrable mass, between which the flowing river might be discerned by its dark, circling line, relieved here and there by flashes of reflected light. The monuments of the town, the dome of the cathedral uprose in undefined outlines. The fair beauty of Florence was veiled in darkness.

The next morning, like so many previous mornings, rose hot and glowing. The town looked absolutely gorgeous in its colouring. The intense blue of the sky was toned by a brooding look which suggested ideas of a furnace seven times heated. The wonderful brilliancy of the skies of Rome was not to be found here, any more than it is to be found in any other part of Italy; nevertheless the skies of Italy are all beautiful. The river ran its cool and picturesque course. There was no troubled surface to show that last night it had been wantonly intruded upon. The sleepers had all disappeared from the smooth copings: whether to work or to idle did not appear; probably the latter.

It was far too hot to walk, and breakfast over, we chartered one of the open Victorias plying for hire, and took a guide with us to save time. He was very ordinary and prosaic, very mechanical in his mode of proceeding; not half so intelligent as our Roman little guide Salvator Rossi had been. The latter, indeed, had begged to accompany us during the remainder of our peregrinations in Italy, but that we had thought unnecessary.

There is so much to be seen in Florence that in merely passing through it, it is difficult to decide what to do, what to leave undone. Its greatest attractions are of course its art treasures; its wonderful picture galleries. It lives more in the comparative present than in the remote past. It is the very opposite to Rome. It has no Forum, no ruins, no Appian Way. It has no St. Peter's to awe by its size, no St. Paul's to charm by its simple dignity. It has a river, but its banks are not lined by ancient houses: no Castle of St. Angelo rises in solid majesty; nothing so beautiful as the Bridge of Fabricius spans the stream. There is no Vatican to cast its halo upon the city, no Pope to pronounce a benediction upon thousands of bowed forms. Much of the glory of Rome is martial; that of Florence is rather intellectual. Here much of thought and science and philosophy has developed and spread out into the world. It has had a distinct influence upon Italy, but it has been the influence of the pen, whilst that of Rome has been of the sword. Its men of the Middle Ages have been great: and for ever intertwined with the name of Florence are the names of such men as Dante, Michel-Angelo, Savonarola, Galileo and Alfieri: the last living in more modern times, and perhaps hardly to be linked with the former, though he made a distinct impression upon the literature of his country. Florence gave birth to none of these, Dante excepted; but they loved her, and more or less lived beneath her skies; and most of their remains repose under marble monuments in the beautiful and interesting aisles of Santa Croce.

With Florence is also for ever associated the names of the Medicis. Here they reigned, and fell, and reigned again, their influence in an earthly sense omnipotent and often misdirected. And here in a round chapel, gorgeous with jewels and marbles and decorated to

the last degree, they sleep their last sleep amidst themselves, their reign over ; their memory not always loved.

Florence is full of magnificent palaces, which bear witness to the greatness of those who raised them : and these are fitting caskets for the art treasures they contain. But in point of beauty of architecture she is frequently deficient. Very much of it belongs to the massive and severe Florentine school, of which the Cathedral is the chief example. It is considered a splendid edifice, and is built of various-coloured marbles, but it failed to impress us. Rather it did the opposite. It lends no repose to the eye ; gives no sense of dignity to the mind. The effect of the coloured marbles is trivial and somewhat frivolous, and seems beneath the dignity of a great and sacred edifice. It is creating an effect upon wrong lines : not by intrinsic beauty and merit, by noble outlines and just proportions, which alone can charm ; but by pleasing the eye with a mosaic-like arrangement of stone. In front of it is the Baptistry, octagonal in form. Its bronze gates, by Ghiberto, were thought so beautiful by Michel-Angelo that he called them the Gates of Paradise. The foundations of the Cathedral were laid in 1294 and completed in 1462 ; and the dome was so much admired by Michel-Angelo that he made it his model for that of St. Peter. The interior of the Cathedral is much more impressive than the exterior. The bell tower is considered one of the most beautiful specimens of its kind in existence. Like the Baptistry and Cathedral, it is built in different coloured marble. The eye turns from them with relief to the blue sky above, and there finds what is absolutely wanting here—repose.

Next in importance is the Church of Santa Croce, intensely ugly in its exterior, but the great Pantheon of Florence, and of more interest than any other that Italy possesses. The church itself has no beauty. The exterior is, indeed, as ugly as exterior can be—as exteriors in Italy so often are ; but a halo of romance and grandeur and dignity surrounds the building through the names with which it is associated, the tombs of the great men it contains. The interior is not like Westminster, a confused gathering of busts and monuments, which make of our beautiful Abbey nothing more or less than a bewildering sculptor's studio or huge monument yard. In Santa Croce the tombs are comparatively few, and for the most part limited to names that have made the country illustrious.

It is indeed impossible to think of Florence without at once calling up a vision of the great men that have taken part in her history. They have been links in the chain of time, binding the beautiful city to her country with a firm and steadfast hold. Venice, Rome, Naples, Florence—they must all be included in a History of Italy ; and no record would be complete if one of the names were left out. True, the past of Florence has been more intellectual than political, but it may be questioned if she is not the more interesting on this



DANTE'S HOUSE

account. The name of Dante seems to inspire one with higher emotions than that of Cæsar. The vision of a Galileo searching the "hidden pathways of the skies" with his newly-discovered lens is more elevating than that of a Nero playing the lyre whilst the ascending flames of Rome cried aloud for a vengeance that did not tarry.

Who can visit Florence and not think of Savonarola? Who does not see rising up before him the long, stern, uncompromising face, and see in it all that is needed to the making of a wonderful preacher, a profound religious as well as political reformer? In spite of his fanaticism, in spite of his errors, we cannot hear his name without a thrill of emotion as one of the reformers of the world, one of the great army of martyrs who have died for their cause, and made the "walking by faith" of this life almost a "walking by sight."

Born at Ferrara in 1452, he became learned at an unusually early age in the study of the old Greek Philosophy, at that time so popular in Italy. But the bias of his mind was distinctly religious, of the most ascetic order, and he very soon decided for a religious life, entering the Dominican Convent at Bologna.

He first appeared as a preacher in Florence in 1482, when he was just thirty years old, having passed from the Dominican Convent of Bologna to that of San Marco in Florence. His trial was an absolute failure. His manner was awkward, his voice was harsh and unmusical; his face at this time was not lighted up with the rapture of enthusiasm, the consciousness of power, which afterwards so distinguished it. Deeply learned though his mind, earnest though his purpose, the mysteries of oratory were as yet sealed to him. His Lenten lectures had to be abandoned.

He was discouraged, but not conquered. He knew what was in him, and felt that a time must arrive when it should come out and do its work. He had a mission to fulfil, and it should be done. It is the privilege of genius to gain strength by failure, and Savonarola was no exception to this rule. He retired to the Dominican Convent at Brescia, and there gradually overcame his defects. The harshness of his voice mellowed into deeper, softer tones; he lost his awkwardness of manner; he gained power and influence by his irresistible genius and enthusiasm. In 1489 he returned to San Marco, and his real life in Florence now began. Failure knew him no more.

Florence at this time was under the influence of the school founded by Lorenzo the Magnificent, the founder of the great Medici family. Art, literature and philosophy had all followed in the wake of the semi-pagan revival of the fifteenth century. All this was at variance with the asceticism of Savonarola's mind: an asceticism which he considered indispensable to true spiritual development and a consistently religious life. He waged war against it, directing his powerful voice and matchless eloquence to the political as well as

the religious errors of the time. Thus he offended the powerful Medicis, who saw in him an enemy of the most dangerous force and influence : and thus he sowed the seeds of the fate that was later on to overtake him.

With the church itself Savonarola had never hitherto been at variance ; and by the Pope he was highly esteemed. But his preaching gradually assumed a more political tendency and influence, for he thought that a political revolution in Florence and throughout Italy would alone bring about the still higher results of a religious awakening and reformation. He prophesied the advent of the French under Charles VIII., and when it took place he was one of the deputation who welcomed Charles as the saviour of Italy. But the French had to leave Florence, and Savonarola, fired by enthusiasm, we might almost say fanaticism, his genius breaking through all restraints, directed all the powers of his mind to political reform.

Like many another man of genius, he went to excess, his mind becoming almost unhinged by his fervour. But his earnestness carried all before it ; his preaching was such as had never been heard ; and his party became strong and numerous. Savonarola fell into extravagances and aimed at impossibilities. Asceticism was his keynote, and it did not accord with the spirit of the age. Everything was to be swept away ; all the licentiousness, all the cardinal sins that reigned. His preaching had a wide-spread effect. Crowds of women flocked to the square in front of the Cathedral and there threw down their costly jewels. Men hitherto debauched and sin-stained brought pile upon pile of the licentious poetry and fiction of the age, and the whole was burnt in a huge mass, of which the smoke must have ascended like incense towards Heaven.

But Savonarola in his religious zeal went too far. It is often so. In his denunciation of everything that was evil, he spared no one ; and even the Pope fell under his lash. This was a fatal mistake, and brought down upon him the displeasure of the head of the church. With more moderation he might have become the greatest religious reformer of his age, almost of any age. As it was, he failed. He was cited before Rome on a charge of heresy. He had spoken against the infallible head of the Church : and this the infallible head could not stand. When cited to appear before Rome, he took no notice of the summons. Then he was forbidden to preach ; was again cited before Rome ; and again disregarded the summons.

His star now set ; his troubles increased. That party of the Medici called the Arrabbiati once more grew in the ascendant. In 1497 Savonarola was excommunicated. He refused to accept the decree, and became more and more at variance with Rome. In 1498 the Arrabbiati once more came into power, and these were the declared enemies of Savonarola. He was again forbidden to preach, and the final crisis was brought about by the preaching of

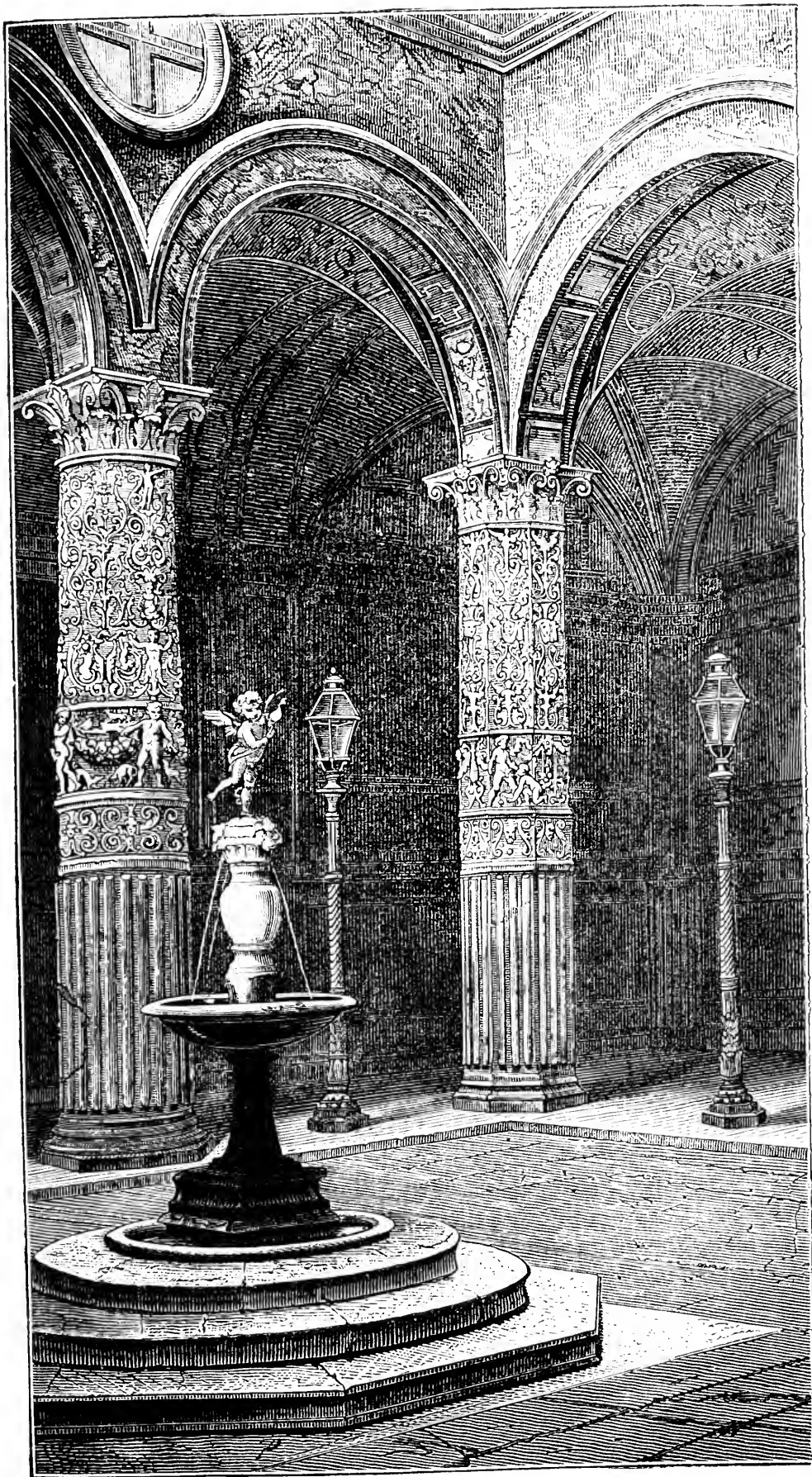
San Francesco da Paglia, a Franciscan monk. There was a revulsion in public feeling against Savonarola, and he was brought to trial on a charge of misleading the people by false prophecies. He was found guilty of heresy and sedition, Rome confirmed the sentence, and he was given up to the secular power; together with Pescia and Maruffi, two others of his order. In spite of many efforts to avert the capital sentence, they were executed, and their bodies burnt, on May 23rd, 1498.

Thus perished one of the greatest men of all ages; one who had he been less great would probably have accomplished more. Fana-ticism was the cause of his downfall. Religious enthusiasm, the strength and might of his genius, carried away his judgment and discretion. The divine gift within him was too much for its earthly casket, and endeavouring to accomplish too much, he failed. It is no uncommon story and experience.

And yet, in one sense, he did not fail. His influence was stupendous; his reformation, if not universal, was widespread, and in some ways abiding. His name will be handed down to all time as one who was a follower of St. Paul: who, possessing many of the gifts and graces of the great apostle, also possessed some of his failings: errors which arose out of his very sincerity; his very desire and anxiety to do his utmost in the cause of good. Perhaps Savonarola never reached the spiritual heights of St. Paul. The latter never forgot to leave the issues in higher Hands than his own. Paul might plant and Apollos might water, but God alone gave the increase. It must be doubted whether Savonarola quite reached this sublime height of faith and humility: whether, humanly speaking, he possessed St. Paul's well balanced mind and perfectly trained organization. But it remains that his name has been handed down to posterity, and will shine in the annals of history as long as time shall last: one of the great men, one of the great religious reformers and enthusiasts, one of the Christian martyrs of the world.

We turn from Savonarola, and a very different vision quickly rises before us. The vision of an aged man sweeping the heavens with the first telescope, and entrenching with delight upon the borders of unknown worlds. Yet the religious enthusiast and the creator of experimental science had much in common. Both were far seeing, both were men of thought and action; both loved their fellow men; the one was quite shipwrecked, the other nearly so, by imprudence and want of tact and moderation.

Though Galileo is more connected with Pisa and Padua than with Florence, the two names are yet inseparable. He was only eighteen when he made his first important discovery in science. Whilst watching the oscillations of a lamp in the cathedral at Pisa, he was arrested by the measured regularity of its vibrations, and this gave him the first idea of the pendulum in the measurement of time. His father had destined him for medicine; but



COURTYARD OF PALAZZA VECCHIO.

nature was too strong for him and he turned to science. His life was a long series of inventions. He revealed and perfected the laws of bodies in motion, and discovered that all falling bodies descended with equal velocity. He invented a microscope, an ordinary and a refractory telescope. These brought him into new worlds. He upset many past and accepted theories. He declared that the moon had no light of her own, was an unequal body composed of hills and valleys. He declared that the Milky Way was composed of countless millions of suns and stars : he discovered the satellites of Jupiter. He revealed the rotation of the sun, and that the earth moved round it. Many of his theories were received as heresies, and some of them he was publicly ordered to renounce. The rack is said to have been resorted to. He was at this period full of years and infirmity, and if he yielded to the Inquisitorial demands, he must not be harshly judged. His denials, after all, concerned only earthly and material matters : they did not affect the welfare of his soul. His famous retort on one occasion has been handed down to posterity. He was bidden to deny that the world moved round the sun, and he did deny it : adding in a whisper, "E pur si muove !"—"Yet still it moves !"

The Inquisition would have compelled him to pass his last years in prison ; but Pope Urban, influenced by Ferdinand the Grand, Duke of Tuscany, restored him to liberty. He died in 1642 at the age of 78, sight and hearing gone, but the mind clear to the end. He had been popular all his days, making friends on the one hand by his genial disposition, and enemies on the other by his irrepressible turn for satire. He was especially fond of music and poetry, and contributed considerably to literature. His works were scientific rather than imaginative, but his style was singularly elegant and flowing for one whose life was spent in treading the severe pathway of science and astronomy. He too rests amongst the great dead of Santa Croce.

Still more linked with the records of Florence is the name of Michel-Angelo : a name one hears in Italy more often than any other. But he was one of the most wonderful of her sons, and could not move without leaving abiding traces behind him. All he touched he perfected. St. Peter's before his time had been little more than a heathen temple. It was due to his wonderful skill that the Florentines were enabled to construct fortifications to their city, by which they long resisted the endeavours of the Medicis to recover its possession. Some of Michel-Angelo's earliest days were spent in the Ducal Palace of the Medicis, when studying at the seminary established by Lorenzo the Magnificent. His first master was Bertoldi, a pupil of Domenico Ghirlandaio. But he quickly out-distanced all masters. The statues of Bacchus and David in Florence are amongst his earliest works : but the great cartoon painted for the Ducal Palace, long the pride of Florence and one of

the glories of Italy, representing a scene in the wars with Pisa, has long since perished.

Michel-Angelo is perhaps the only man who ever lived whose genius was of a threefold order, for he was equally great as a sculptor, a painter and an architect. Talent is not infrequently prodigal in a diversity of gifts, but genius is rarely so.

Once more we move the magic glass and behold a figure most of all associated with Florence, for the fair city had the honour of giving him birth. It is laurel-crowned. It takes us back to remote ages, for Dante was born in 1265. They were troubled times, and Dante took part in the wars and skirmishes that went on between rival houses. The great poet—great for all time—wielded the sword as well as the pen. He rose to the highest dignity of the city—that of one of the Priori—and this was the eventual cause of his downfall. Florence was divided into two factions, the Neri and the Bianchi—the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Dante belonged to the Bianchi, and the Guelphs triumphed through the treachery of Pope Boniface VIII. Dante in the end was banished from Florence—to their endless shame—and never returned to his native city. He died at Ravenna in 1321.

It was in Florence that Dante first met Beatrice. He was very young and she was only eight years old, but the impression made upon him never faded. He loved for all time, and she was the inspiring motive of all his poetry. Fate was cruel and they never married; but the record of their love has gone down to the ages as an emblem of all that is chaste and beautiful; an affection celestial rather than earthly in its elements.

The name of Florence is inseparably linked with these and other great names, and it is impossible to visit the city without feeling that their influence in some mysterious way overshadows you, that their presence is still there. In the quiet aisles of Santa Croce you pass their tombs, and as one after another you read those illustrious records, their great deeds seem to unroll before you as a scroll, time and space are annihilated, and you feel yourself the centre of a still moving and breathing assembly.

The town itself possesses many proofs of their greatness. Palaces which have been the glory of past ages, and are filled with priceless treasures. The very thought of all the picture galleries of Florence is almost exhausting. A long sojourn is needed to grow familiar with them. To hurry through the galleries is to do what would have been better left undone.

It is a fair city, this Florence. We felt it so, very emphatically, as we went about that first morning from point to point, from one lovely spot to another. The town itself is not so beautiful as its surroundings. Many of the streets are narrow and roughly paved, but the tall houses are often very picturesque, with their imposing doorways and trellised balconies; and the sun casts deep lights and shadows

as it travels on its course ; shadows which lengthen and deepen yet more as the course grows westward.

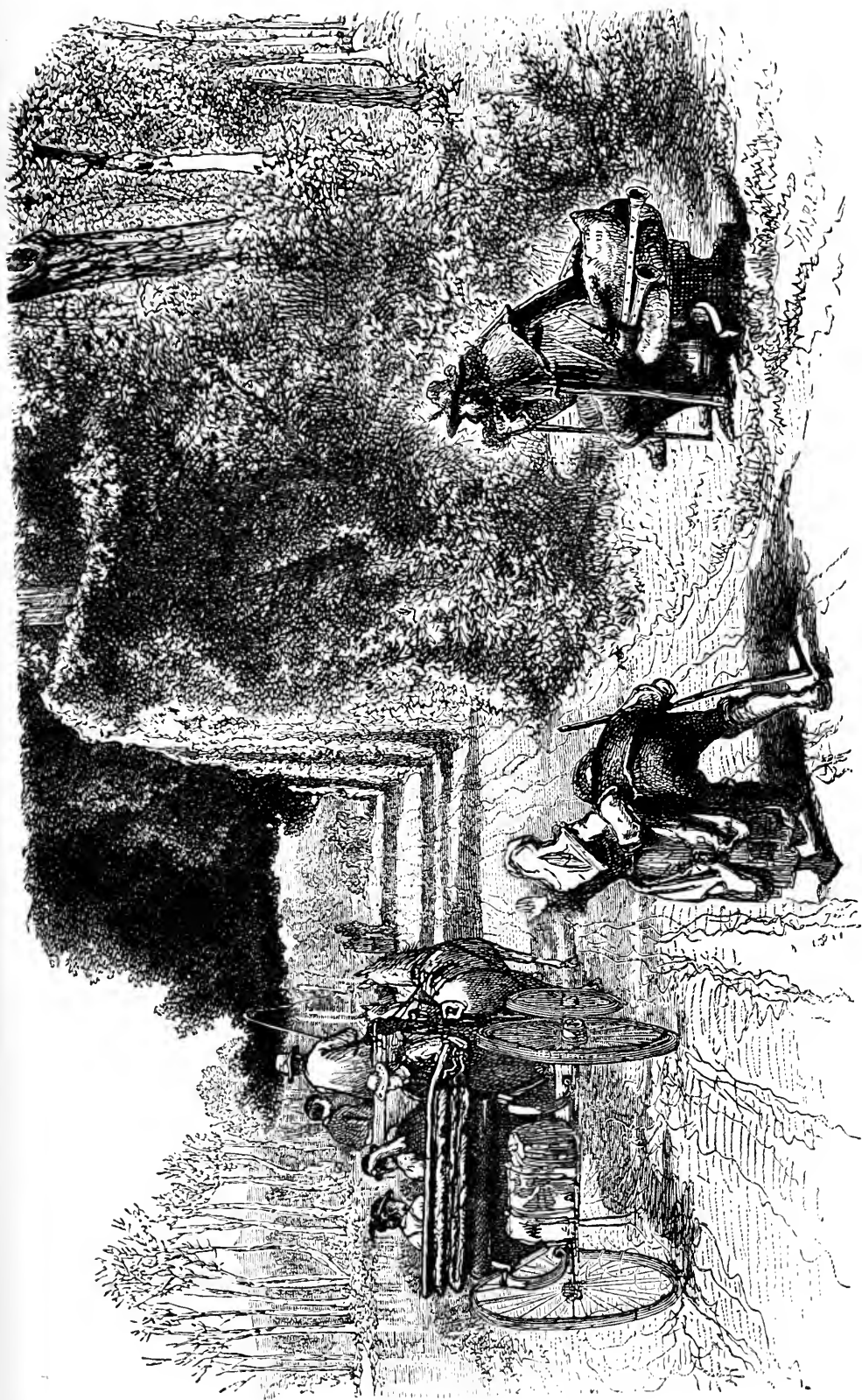
And the Florentines in their costumes are graceful, and their dark, flashing eyes and deep-rose cheeks often make the women beautiful and the men comely. They live in closely-packed houses, but it is said that they are especially good and moral. Probably as in most other places it is a mixture of wheat and tares ; some trees bearing fruit forty, sixty or a hundred fold ; others cumbering the ground for a season ; to sink to lower depths, or to rise upwards by some earthly or heavenly influence.

The streets are many of them irregular, meeting at angles of forty-five degrees, and puzzling the visitor by their apparent want of purpose. But there are more open parts, where the squares are dignified, and palaces rear their proud heads, as if bearing all the weight of the stately Florentines of past ages : many of them witnesses of the rise and fall of the Medicis : the tyrannies and treacheries, the wars and revenges of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

Dante's house is proudly shown, and is picturesque and interesting. A halo surrounds it : something like the halo surrounding that other house at Stratford-on-Avon. Strange that the two great poets of the world in dying should, as the ages rolled on, be destined to leave so little record behind them. It is as though their works were to be their one best, sufficient monument. Of Dante nothing is really known ; Shakespeare's very identity has been questioned. It matters little. They have left enough for the world behind them. The Inquisitors doubted Galileo's statement that the earth moved ; the Neri persecuted him : "Yet still it moves," he murmured. They might deny the fact, they could not alter it. And it moves yet. And we have Dante and Shakespeare in their works to bear witness to themselves, and it is all we need.

Dante's house is in a narrow street. It is entered by a small doorway, over which is a Romanesque arch. It is ancient looking, but is probably very different in appearance from what it was six hundred years ago. There are barred windows which make it look like a prison or an asylum. Opposite to it is a high tower, round about which pigeons everlastingly wheel their flight, flashing and darkening by turns in the sunlight. An old gas lamp throws out its faint glimmer at night, and in the ghostly shadows of the recesses one can fancy the long, grave, beautiful face of the immortal poet gazing forth upon a world from which so much of the romance seems to have died out. A different world in his day, and a different race. But it is the privilege of genius to be in harmony with all time, and Dante would probably understand the world of to-day quite as much as he did that of six centuries ago. For genius is a divine gift, and has the divine attribute of comprehensiveness.

It was difficult not to waste time in musing upon the poet and his *Divina Commedia*, when face to face with the portal through which



THE CASCINE, FLORENCE.

he so often must have passed. One's thoughts were full of sadness ; it could not be otherwise, for life and death are sad and here we seemed confronted by both ; and we passed on to a spot that for many would be full of sadness also. It was the small cemetery within the town, devoted to the English, surrounded by houses ; enclosed in high white walls, guarded by iron gates that are kept locked. Here the dead lie, in the very midst of the living. It is now closed for interments, and in a white, flower-covered lodge within the gates dwells the guardian of this true and perfect God's acre. You ring, and a woman comes forth and admits you.

It is indeed a lovely spot. If the cemetery at Rome was sufficient to make Shelley almost in love with death, how much more this in Florence. I have never seen anything at all to approach it. Its very beauty, apart from its destination, makes it holy. Death here seems to be robbed of its terrors, the grave of its sadness : nay, both death and the grave are made attractive. Happy the fate, the mind whispers, if to die is to lie here. Pure blossoms scent the air. The sunshine glints amidst the trees, and the leaves make beautiful the paths on which they flicker. Over all are the skies of this sunny clime, high, ethereal and glowing : an earnest of a world beyond, which the eye cannot penetrate nor the heart of man conceive.

On the left, half way up the somewhat hilly path, is a tomb which seems to add beauty and sanctity to this hallowed spot. It is that of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Of white marble, pure and chaste, it is worthy of its destination. It is impossible to gaze upon the tomb without emotion. No spot on earth could be more fitting for the repose of the ashes of the poetess : that frail casket which held so great a soul. Of inscription there is none ; merely the initials E. B. B. and the date of her death. She also needs no epitaph, but lives sufficiently in her works, the intensity and earnestness of her thought and purpose.

And in a small spot not very far off Mauleverer found the little grave which he had not seen for twenty years. It was in perfect order, and roses bloomed above the small white marble monument. The inscription was simple : Alice Marguerite, only daughter of Sir Jasper and Lady Mauleverer. Aged seven. For twenty years the little spirit had inhabited the realms of eternity, and its beautiful tenement had reposed under the blue Italian skies. The tomb was fresh and spotless as though it had been placed there yesterday. In this Southern atmosphere nothing that is beautiful seems to fade ; nothing grows old excepting man in obedience to the inevitable law.

We left the cemetery to its singular repose, and went up through the cool and delicious way, under the trees, and ascended the heights. The fair city of Florence lay at our feet. Dividing her, the river ran its course. The monuments and churches of Florence upreared their heads, conspicuous amongst them the dome of the Cathedral and its detached belfry. Near the Pitti Palace the famous Boboli

Gardens were mapped out, and one could almost hear the whispering trees, almost trace the paths and sections and the beautiful Portezza di Belvedere ; and just beyond them the Porta Romana, leading out into the broad thoroughfare of the Viale Petrarca and the open suburbs of the town.

Spanning the river were the picturesque bridges, and to and fro in a small, incessant stream went the fair Florentines, occupied with their daily work.

Over all were the lovely Italian skies. The broad sunshine fell upon all, gleamed and flashed upon the far-off river, lighted up the Cathedral dome, was reflected in a thousand flames from a thousand different points. The air seemed filled with perfume, the eye was charmed with a thousand rainbow hues. It was fairy-land : a dream-world from which one hardly wished to awaken ; a lotus-eating existence. Life seemed made up of poetry and music and rapture. Love's hour-glass ran in golden sands, and ran for ever. The enchanter's wand was upon you, and you dreamed that from love there was no awakening, no disenchantment. It was Paradise once more, where nothing changed and nothing died. The trees were ever green, the skies blue, the sun unclouded, and youth and beauty never passed away.



THE LAND OF MORN.

THE candle flickered faint and low,
The fire had died out long ago ;
The wall was blank, the floor was bare
No ray of brightness hovered there ;
Without the city's ceaseless din—
The stillness of despair within.

No more the page he dimly scanned,
His pen had fallen from his hand ;
His weary head, in would-be rest,
Had sunk down idly on his breast ;
A tear that slumber could not chain
Upon his cheek had left its stain.

Yet whence the tranquil smile that shone
So steadfast o'er those features wan ?
Ah ! not of earth its peace was born,
But in the far-off Land of Morn,
Where the world's shadows may not sweep,
And Sorrow has eternal sleep !

WILLIAM TOYNBEE.

D I V I D E D .

BY KATHERINE CARR.

CHAPTER III.

HOMEWARDS.

EARLY on the morning after Monsieur de Kériadec's unwelcome arrival, Madame Lenard came to her niece's room to scold, pity, condemn and advise.

For once, the good lady was seriously displeased with her spoiled child. She had had no idea that Denise's return to the stage had been without the knowledge of her husband ; had she done so, the little scheme would never have come to anything. She had more common sense than both Monsieur Lenard and her niece put together, and she certainly would not have countenanced such open rebellion in any young wife, were the latter the most ill-used person in the world. She made a pretty correct surmise that the de Kériadecs did not quite illustrate the harmony of married life ; but it was her maxim not to interfere between husband and wife, and though she had grave fears for Denise when she heard of the three months' separation, she did not feel called upon to interfere. All she could do was to keep tactful watch over the girl's good name, and that office she fulfilled admirably, almost without Denise noticing that she did so. She found Denise putting on her bonnet, an open portmanteau in the middle of the room, and dresses, jackets, boots, hats, littered about the floor in hopeless confusion.

"Eh, bien ! naughty one !" she said, standing in the doorway, and shaking her head at her refractory niece ; "what have you to say for yourself ?"

"Nothing. Nothing in the world," answered Denise, turning round her pretty face, in which there were traces of a sleepless night. "What is there you would have me say, aunt ?"

"I am ashamed of you," said Madame Lenard severely, coming into the room and sitting stiffly on a high-backed chair that stood by the open portmanteau. "I am deeply disappointed."

Denise turned away again, and went on tying her bonnet-strings. In the face that looked back at her from the glass were signs of two little dimples that did not give token of much repentance. She was only wondering how long Madame Lenard's severity would last ; there was something comical in the dear good soul's righteous attempt to elongate and stiffen her kind round face, as she sat gazing into the

half-filled portmanteau. After a moment she stooped to pick up a tumbled petticoat, frilled and laced like a baby's robe, and began arranging the untidy chaos that Denise chose to consider the right way to pack.

"You are an incorrigible child to raise all this commotion," she went on. "Why did you and your uncle never tell me that your poor husband did not know what you were doing? It was not treating me well."

"Ah! my poor uncle," murmured Denise, her mischievous eyes shining. Madame Lenard gave a little cough before she answered; she hoped Denise did not see the smile that, against her will, was wrinkling the corners of her lips.

"It is not a question of your uncle. He was ill-advised; it all arose from his too great affection for you. My poor Denise," she exclaimed, unable any longer to keep up a show of anger, "why did you not come to me? I have always guessed that there were little troubles between you and Raoul. But I did not imagine how bad they were, nor how naughty and headstrong you could be. Oh, I have been grieving over it, I can assure you. It was not worthy of you, my child."

Denise shrugged her shoulders, murmuring something about tyranny, ennui, the selfishness of men.

"Come, come! That is unjust," said Madame Lenard. "The poor fellow means all for the best; and, in this case, his reasons are excellent. If he is a little bit of a Puritan in regard to you, it is only because he is so foolishly fond of you that he fears contact with the world for you. These young men will be a little jealous. But what would you have? It is their way of loving."

"O!" exclaimed Denise, with a long drawn-out sigh. "Love—love—love! What a bore it is."

"That is because you do not understand it. Some day you will learn your mistake. But take care, Denise. The knowledge may come too late. There are not many men capable of loving truly; now that you have got one who adores you, do not thrust him from you in pride and temper. Child, child; how we must have spoilt you."

"Am I so bad then? Ah, yes; I suppose it is so. I do not deserve to be loved; is that it?"

She had joined Madame Lenard, and was pretending to help her to pack, and now she looked up at her with rather sad blue eyes.

"I am hard-hearted and vain and wilful. Well! it is all at an end now. Next time you see me I shall be solemn and prim, with a black silk apron and clattering sabots, like the good people at Camper. Not a smile about me, I shall be so sedate," she said, trying to laugh. "Is it not a charming picture?"

"You will be charming whatever the picture may be—do not fear," replied the fond old aunt; "and happy as well. Raoul would

give his right hand to make you so. Why will you not help him? Try and be a little sorry for him, *mignonne*."

"For Raoul? *He* is happy enough, is he not?"

"With a wife who does not care for him—who deceives him? Ah, yes, that is what it comes to. I should not be too happy if I were Raoul. But see! You have eaten nothing. Finish your rolls and coffee. It will soon be time to start. He is waiting for you downstairs."

"Then there is no hope, and I am really to go? Really to say good-bye to all that I care for—to you and my uncle and Paris? Oh, do not let me go. Only keep me; and I will be so good, so good," cried Denise, throwing her arms round Madame Lenard's plump waist, her face full of despairing entreaty.

Madame Lenard would have given a good deal to have been able conscientiously to answer: "Stay then, and send your husband to Jericho." But she realised that the position had its serious side, and stifled the desire.

"Dear one, think what you are saying," she replied kindly. "Remember that you are not any longer our naughty, spoilt child; but a woman, with the power to make or mar a good man's life—and that man your husband, whom you are bound in honour and duty to love and obey. Do not be a coward. You used never to be that. But try and have more patience, and be a little grateful for the love the poor fellow gives to you."

Denise was too well used to affection to appreciate its value; but she was touched, and the defiant eyes softened.

"Bien. I will do my best; but I cannot promise to succeed. Now, kiss me, good aunt, and pray for your hopeless naughty one. There is Raoul calling. Adieu, adieu."

Monsieur Lenard accompanied the young couple to the railway station, half angry with Raoul, half ashamed of his own share in Denise's escapade. He kept bursting into little apologies, and lame excuses and explanations, which Raoul listened to in silence with but half-concealed contempt. What did it matter to him whether Monsieur Lenard had discouraged her or not? It was with Denise that he was concerned; the rest of the world might go its own way.

"He has not good manners; one might even say he did not know how to be civil," commented Monsieur Lenard. "To think that we have married my pretty Denise to such a rustic!"

As the fiacre rattled over the hot white streets, past the brilliant Rue de Rivoli, where, at this hour of the morning, only busy men and women were hurrying to their business, heedless of the tempting shop-windows; past Notre Dame, grey and warm in the sunshine; away, past all the familiar sights and sounds, Denise felt her heart grow heavier and heavier.

Even the Gare, with its noise and hurry and bustle, the porters in

their faded blue uniforms, the cabs and omnibuses jostling each other out of the way, the women, with heads enveloped in blue veils, rushing down the platform to catch the train; it was all a part of Paris—bright, impatient, sunshiny Paris.

"Pauvre petite," said Monsieur Lenard compassionately. "Pauvre petite."

He pushed a bundle of journals through the window of the compartment—the *Figaro*, *Journal pour Rire*, everything he could find that he thought might amuse her.

"Au revoir, au revoir," he whispered, as the bell rang with a discordant din. "If ever you are ready to come again—*come*."

There was a scramble, a shutting of doors; slowly the train steamed out of the station and passed out of the city, hastening its speed as though eager to leave it behind.

Paris lay behind in the past; Camper waited, quiet and monotonous, in the future.

When the husband and wife found themselves shut up together for a long tête-à-tête, an awkward shyness kept them for some time silent.

Raoul had taken a seat in the far corner of the compartment on the same side as his wife. His knitted brows and compressed lips might have shown Denise, had she understood him better, that he was pondering deeply and anxiously. But she only thought, "How cross he looks!" and supposed that she was in such dire disgrace that he would not deign to speak to her.

Every instant that bore her away from beloved Paris, where she had been admired and fêted to an extent that might have turned an older and wiser head than hers, made her more homesick and despondent.

Then there was the humiliation! If only Raoul had been patient and sensible, and come to fetch her quietly, instead of rushing off in a rage to claim her before all her friends—and enemies! How they would laugh over the story! How they would sneer at her bourgeois husband whom she overheard Mademoiselle Clothilde speak of as "a ploughboy!"

Has it ever struck you what lamentably foolish trifles will put us into a fever of irritation when perhaps we are able to conduct ourselves pretty gallantly under serious trials? It is the little things that take us unawares, the tiny pin-pricks to our nerves that make us start and writhe as though we were stung by a gad fly. Then you will, perhaps, pardon my poor Denise for feeling unreasonably angry with, if not actually insulted by Raoul, on account of the *clothes he wore*.

She disliked ridicule, and by his outlandish attire he had brought it upon her.

Having come to Paris in a hurry of distress and wrath, he had

never given a thought to the mighty question of dress. He had been riding about muddy lanes when he learnt accidentally of his wife's extraordinary behaviour, and he had started, then and there, for Paris, booted and gaitered, and with his old riding-whip in his hand.

Naturally, he had no opportunity of travelling to Camper next day in any other costume. To tell the truth, he guessed that this unfortunate accident would annoy the delicate susceptibilities of his wife, and it was with the desire to keep himself as much as possible from her view that he had chosen the corner seat on the same side of the compartment, so that unless she deliberately turned to look at him he need not offend her sight.

Denise had parted from Madame Lenard full of excellent intentions. But now, as she thought over the happy life of pleasurable work and excitement that she was exchanging for the dreary solitude of Camper, her spirits sank; whilst every stolen glance at Raoul increased her irritation. What a great clumsy boor he looked in his rough old clothes, and how cross his eyes and mouth were! How was it conceivable for her to be happy, or to sympathise with anyone so thoroughly provincial?

She did mean to be kinder; to conceal her own troubles; to be sorry for him, as Madame Lenard had asked her to be. But, un- luckily, when he presently addressed her to ask if she were comfortable, it was at a moment when she was struggling against the feminine weakness of tears, so that, in very self-defence, she had to answer with cold brevity: "Si, si; I am very well;" as though she did not wish to be spoken to.

How often we speak the wrong word at the wrong moment; at any other time it might be the right one; but how are we to foretell that with our short-sightedness, our blundering want of mental perception?

"Are you still angry?" went on Raoul. "Can you not forgive and forget? Not that I regret what I have done," he added quickly. "On the contrary, I should act in the same way to-morrow under the same circumstances. But cannot that be buried? Why should we not start afresh, Denise? Will you?"

"Why—why did you come like *that*, then, to humble me before everyone by making such a guy of yourself? I believe, in truth, that you like making me ashamed of you!" cried Denise, provoked by the implied censure in his words, and casting on his gaitered legs a glance of such withering contempt that, had he not been so thoroughly in earnest, Raoul must have seen the comic side of the situation. Instead of that, he only felt an unnecessary false shame as he compared the delicate beauty of his wife with his own powerful frame, with a disheartening sense of the contrast between them. She, slim, graceful, refined; he, big, untidy, uncouth. No wonder she was ashamed of him.

He did not answer for a few minutes. Then, as if constrained to speak a word in his own justification, he said in a low voice :

"It was for you I did it."

Perhaps she did not hear the remark ; or, hearing, gave little credit to its veracity. Otherwise, she must have been touched by a ring of wistful longing in the young man's voice. At all events, she made no rejoinder, but leant further back in her corner, so that he could not see the pretty, petulant face that he loved, poor fellow, better than anything else upon earth.

It was a long, exhausting journey to Camper. The sun baked the carriage through and through, the dust flew in clouds in at the windows ; the hours seemed interminable.

It is hardly possible for two unfriendly persons, travelling alone together for a whole day and a half, not to follow one of two alternatives ; either to widen the rupture, or to have a truce, at least for the time being.

Raoul tried desperately to hate Denise. His pride told him he ought to do so ; his quick temper longed for an excuse to relieve itself by storming and raging. He told himself that she was selfish, obstinate, heartless, and that his affection was thrown away upon her ; then his reason suggested that, what he had so signally failed to do by kindness, he might accomplish by force ; and that it was incumbent on his dignity and manliness to *break* her will.

But against pride, temper and commonsense, Love—which reckes not of logic—made so gallant a fight that it came off victorious, leaving him, as much as ever, the slave and lover of a capricious woman.

"She *shall* learn to care for me," he said to himself, as they drew near to Quimper that summer afternoon. "I am strong ; and in time she must give in—I wonder what she is thinking of now ?"

She was leaning back, with closed eyes, her face very tired and childlike in its repose. How young she was. How small and fragile to dream of fighting her own way in the world, unloved, unprotected !

She was not asleep, but thinking of the days that were gone, of the days that were to come, and wondering if it was within the bounds of probability that she should ever be happy again, in the dull life to which she was doomed. It was unbearable to be so cold and stiff and sulky with the companion with whom one was destined to spend a life-time ; her genial nature recoiled from the idea. She was beginning, too, to feel some compunction for her folly, and to think that, after all, Madame Lenard may have had reasons for saying that it was Raoul who was most to be pitied. She *had* been unkind to him. If he loved her so much, how deeply she must have hurt his feelings sometimes by her childish reproaches, and the careless speeches that were always so much more bitter than she meant them to be.

But now, most likely, he had lost patience with her. He had not once addressed her for the last three hours, or even looked at her. How big he was ! with what a strong, determined face. It was not ugly, either, though it was rugged and sunburnt as that of one of the fishermen at Camper. He was as unlike the Parisian dandies as a St. Bernard is unlike a lady's lap-dog ; as full of vigour and character as they were vapid and weak.

She wondered what he would be like if once his temper got the better of him. It would frighten her, she thought, in spite of her courage and bravado. She realised how weak and powerless she was beside him ; how easily he could crush her, morally and physically, if he chose !

She did not guess that, for all his outward calm, there was a tempest of love raging so fiercely within him, that it was all he could do to restrain himself from telling her, then and there, how impossible it was for him to bear her coldness and indifference. The whole of his vehement nature was shaken, and trembling, as it were, with longing to *make* her love him.

It was maddening to sit like this, apart from her, in sullen silence, as though they were enemies, when his very soul was bursting with a devotion that was the more intense from its enforced suppression.

"Denise," he cried very suddenly ; "for Heaven's sake, love me."

"I will, Raoul, I will — if I can," she said incoherently, startled by the passion in his face and voice, and letting him put his strong arms round her. "I would, indeed I would, if I could."

"*Cannot* you? What can I do to make you? Am I then such a brute, Denise, that it is impossible?"

"We are so different," she faltered. "We can never understand each other. What I like, you hate ; what you like, I hate."

"If I hate some things you like, it is because I know what they really are, and that they would hurt you, my little Denise. Except for letting you return on the stage, I would deny you nothing that I can possibly give you. Some day, when affairs are better, we will go yearly to Paris. But I cannot afford it yet. You know that, Denise. It is not my fault. I want to make you happy. I know you are dull at Camper ; but you see it is my home. You would not have me give it up altogether? Denise, my bien-aimée, let me teach you to care for it as I care for it myself."

"O, I will be better to you, if I can," she said gently. "Let us make a fresh start, and see if we cannot be friends."

"Friends? No more than that, Denise?"

She did not answer, but laid one of her hands in his deprecatingly.

"Will it never be more than that?" he repeated. "Do not be afraid of telling me the truth, Denise."

"I cannot tell," she whispered, shaking her head.

He dropped her hand with a sigh, and did not press her further.

He had waited nearly two years for her love, and his patience was beginning to exhaust itself.

CHAPTER IV.

AT CAMPER.

RAOUL'S home at Camper, near a little unknown fishing hamlet, was as unlike anything Denise was accustomed to as it is possible to conceive.

The inhabitants were simple, primitive folk, silent and grave, like most toilers by the sea, and with no interests beyond their own home. The place had once been notorious for the smuggling that was carried on in the neighbourhood, and even now was suspected of being a favourite hiding place for contraband goods. About once in two years there would be a panic; the law would swoop down and make several arrests, to the fierce indignation of the people. Then, for a time, all would run smoothly again and Camper be of the world forgotten as usual.

Denise felt a shrinking fear of the rough sailors and fishermen, and of their scarcely less rough womankind. Used as she was to the restraints of a town, she imagined that there were all sorts of dangers lurking for her on the lovely shore, where no one was ever to be met except grim, weather-beaten men and women, grown stern and hard from their constant struggle with danger and familiarity with sudden death.

Amongst these people Raoul was a king, a hero. From childhood he had thrown himself into their ways, run the same perils and learnt by experience their hardships; besides doing what lay in his power, by personal aid and sympathy, to alleviate their melancholy lot.

More than once during the winter, Denise had seen him go out on wild, stormy nights, to help and advise the poor creatures whose nearest and dearest were in peril on the waves. But it was only by accident that she learnt how he, himself, was always the first to take active part in the rescues, the first to launch a boat when the fury of the sea scared off all but the most daring, and the last to give up a forlorn hope if it was within the range of possibility that a life could be saved.

The old Château, which had been in the possession of the de Kériadecs for centuries, was situated about three quarters of a mile from the edge of the cliffs. The tract of land between it and the shore was rather bleak and desolate, ending in the steep cliff, at the foot of which lay a rugged line of rocks that stretched out to sea in a dangerous reef, upon which many a good boat had foundered.

The Château itself was a picturesque old building of moderate size, with stained grey walls up which, in some places, the ivy

clambered with that profusion it so often lavishes on decay and old age; peeping in at the mullioned windows, tenderly decking the fissured stones with sheeny green in sunshine, and rustling with strange, ghostly shiverings when the wind swept over the sea. The most modern part of the house—and that itself had seen many more winters than the oldest veteran in the country—was the Beacon Tower, which had been erected by one of Raoul's ancestors in commemoration of his son and heir's safe return from war; and it was Raoul's pride, as it had been that of his forefathers, always to keep the beacon burning through the night, and sometimes even in the daytime also, when fog or storm-cloud concealed the treacherous, low reef, where evil spirits were said to wait and watch to lure souls into their deadly toils.

But, if the view seawards required a special delight in the wild and stern to recommend it to the eye, the outlook from the other side of the Château, looking inland, had all the charm of contrast.

First came the old-fashioned garden with its clipped yew hedges and green alleys, and its long terrace, at each end of which stood quaint old statues—a Ceres carrying a sheaf of corn which was abruptly broken off at the head, and a Mercury poised with one toe on a chipped globe, on which Raoul had clumsily engraved his initials, when a destructive small boy, side by side with the large and crooked signature of one Gesril de Kériadec who had died fighting for the Chouanerie.

The garden wandered away in a maze of fruit trees and roses that looked as if they grew there unmolested by the pruning hands of gardeners, until garden melted into orchard, and orchard into shady woods with soft, mossy walks, and dazzling glimpses of emerald glades, of cool, deep dells, lined with delicate waving ferns, and sloping banks fragrant with the scent of many flowers.

Beyond the woodlands came the open country, with its small farmsteads and cultivated fields and meadows, rather bare and bleak in winter, but in summer having a golden beauty of its own; although, from a farmer's point of view, they were not particularly lucrative; as Raoul knew by experience.

On the whole, then, most people with any appreciation of beauty and colour would have revelled in the scenery of Camper, both in its stern and in its gentle aspect; and that Denise was able to persuade herself that it was absolutely insupportable is only a proof of the convincing powers of prejudice, which will persuade us not only to *call* black white but to *believe* that we think it so.

Nevertheless, little as she cared for Camper, Denise could not help being impressed by the calm loveliness of the scene as she and her husband drove home that summer evening. In the late, mellow twilight, the sea stretched away fair and still and peaceful, just breaking into little silver ripples against the low brown rocks and shining

wet sands. Against the amber sky rose the tower of the Château, picturesque and fairy-like, its delicate battlements thrown into vivid black relief, upon a pale and gleaming background.

Raoul could not repress his pleasure at being back again. "How glorious it is to be at home!" he exclaimed. "Look at the sea, Denise. I should like to see what Paris can show you to come up to this!"

"It all depends on individual taste, does it not?" said Denise, quick to resent any implied disparagement of her native city. "Paris is good enough for me, at all events."

She was thinking of the bare, stiff rooms of the Château; of the ghostly old four-post bed in her own room, with its dingy, unwholesome curtains, and cold white walls; of the chimneys that smoked in a north-east wind; of the long uncarpeted corridors, where the draughts were so dreadful in winter.

Raoul was not rich, but, until after his marriage, he had not considered himself an absolutely poor man. He had more than enough for his own wants, which were moderate in the extreme.

But when he brought Denise to Camper it struck him very forcibly that her surroundings were not worthy of so fair and precious a treasure; and it is true that Denise, who had been brought up in the midst of what, compared with this, was luxury, thought it terribly comfortless and triste. The Château wanted at least £2,000 spent on it to make it thoroughly fit for its dainty little mistress; and unfortunately ready money was not easily obtained. The estate was encumbered with debts, contracted by the late Monsieur de Kériadec, an extravagant bon-vivant with an unfortunate predilection for the pleasures of Paris, who had squandered his money away from home, whilst his wife and son got on at Camper as best they could without him.

When, at the age of twenty-one, Raoul succeeded to the diminished property, he lost no time in beginning what had been his ambition since boyhood, viz., an improvement in the condition of the poor people on the coast, amongst whom he had grown up almost like one of themselves. The hamlet of Camper was to be thoroughly renovated; its present state was a scandal, though, as the inhabitants had never known a more prosperous lot, it had not occurred to them to grumble at it, or to force their grievances before public notice. But no sooner had Raoul begun his good work than grievance after grievance unfolded itself, and he soon learnt what a small area of misery and squalor his charity could cover. When he married he found that he was spending so much on other people that he could not afford to give his wife all the luxuries he would have liked. But, though he felt that there is some truth and much that is agreeable in the maxim, "Let charity begin at home," he was not one to relinquish anything he had once undertaken.

Until the fishermen possessed decent habitations, Denise must

wait for her luxuries. He troubled over it much, since he loved her to desperation and wished her to have every wish gratified ; and he often encouraged her to point out to him what improvements she most desired, storing up her remarks in his mind with a view to their future gratification.

"We will make the place fit for you—when my ship comes home," he would say.

Unluckily, the ship showed no signs of coming home, or, if ever it did, it must have foundered on the reefs. At any rate, no money was forthcoming.

However, by dint of one or two acts of self-denial, Raoul had been busy preparing a little surprise for his wife during her absence in Paris.

How he had looked forward to her pleasure and gratitude, hoping that, perhaps, it would help them to take up life in a more friendly spirit when next they met ! And the bitterness of his disappointment at the present disheartening state of affairs is not to be expressed.

"The place will be very *triste*. They did not expect us home for another two months, and nothing will be ready for you. You must make allowances," he said, as they drove past the over-grown grass court-yard, enclosed by its tall, rusty iron gates. Ivy was creeping up the old sun-dial ; a seat, with one leg gone, was supporting itself in a lop-sided fashion ; the whole place, from this point of view had a neglected appearance of poverty and decay, even now that the twilight, as it melted into a silver moonlight, cast over all things a kind of spiritual and mystic beauty. On the terrace Mercury, on tip-toe, stood poised in ecstatic flight to the moon ; one could not see that he had lost one of his wings, or that Ceres, with her cornucopia, was noseless and fingerless ; at night, at least, they might imagine themselves to be brother and sister to the Apollo Belvidere or Vatican Hermes, belonging to the past world of immortal sculpture.

Below, in the rose garden, a long alley of tea-roses gleamed white out of the shadows ; glow-worms were lighting their little lamps all over the dewy lawns ; the gravel pathway shone like quick-silver.

As they entered the hall, with its oak-walls and beams, and its polished floor, the tall white lilies in a china pot in one corner, making an harmonious little bit of picturesque still life, there was a refreshing sense of coolness and quaintness. Round this hall ran a gallery out of which opened the bedrooms, all more or less in want of renovation, though worthy old Diana, cuisinière and housekeeper, prided herself that such a horror as a speck of dust or a cobweb was a thing unknown within their precincts.

"Madame will be so good as to make excuses," said this good soul as she received her master and mistress with manifold courtesies, whilst the little grey curls on each side of her head bobbed and shook.

"Madame, though ever welcome, is unexpected; the covers for the salon are not yet returned from the laundress, and all things are upside-down. Madame's bed-room, alone, is as it should be."

"Yes, yes; I quite understand," said Denise, wearily climbing the black-oak staircase.

"That fusty old bed," she was saying to herself; "and those terrible drab hangings and curtains."

But at the open door of her room, she paused, with an ejaculation of pleasurable surprise.

"Ah! Raoul, what is this?"

Here, at least, was a transformation. Instead of the melancholy drab hangings, was a fresh, brightly coloured cretonne—the very pattern Denise had always set her heart on; soft clusters and sprays of pink roses on a white ground, with no hard, regular lines that she could *count*, when lying in bed. The little sofa with its pale pink cushions, the cosy arm-chair, the toilette-table with its rose-coloured ribbons and falling laces—how pretty and dainty it all looked! The furniture was white, and everything, from the writing-table in one of the window-recesses, down to the washing-stand with its rosebud china, was as refined and pretty as woman could wish to see.

Denise's heart smote her. Raoul, when she called him, had come to her side, and was looking down at her with shy delight at her evident pleasure.

"Was she worthy of his love?" she asked herself as she raised her grateful eyes, which remorse was making very large and soft.

"Oh, it was good of you, mon ami," she said; "I do not deserve it."

"Nothing is as good as it should be, for you," he said, pride in her beauty shining in his eyes. "You do not half know how sweet and lovely you are, my Denise. But I knew what you wished to have done to this room. You used to talk about it sometimes, and I did not forget. Whilst you were away I have had an upholsterer here from Paris—and my cousin Nathalie has helped me with it all. Thanks are due to her. I, myself, do not understand much about these things. Perhaps next year we can do some other room, and so, by degrees improve the place; and then—perhaps—some day, you will not hate it all so much."

She murmured something inarticulate. She was touched almost to tears; and to hide her sudden emotion, moved hastily from him to one of the windows, so that her face was hidden. After a glance at her, he quietly left the room, and she heard the sound of his footsteps slowly and reluctantly descending the oak stairs.

"O, what a horror I am!" she exclaimed, pushing back the soft curls that clustered on her aching forehead. "I ought to have kissed him, and told him how good and generous I think him. Why is it that, with him, I never do the right thing, but make myself appear more cold and unamiable every day? I think he loves me too

much—is too much my slave.” She stretched her arms over her head with a long sigh of weariness. “It is dull—dull to distraction, to be loved whether one will or not.”

Before she got into bed, she felt irresistibly drawn to look out once more upon the quiet sea.

Curled up on the broad window-seat, her little golden-brown head resting against the white shutter, she sat there for a long while dreaming—a fair vision framed in white, the moonlight etherialising her girlish face. It was a pity Raoul was not there to see her.

Everything was so still, so calm, so silent. She could not even hear the gentle break of the waves up the sands, though, where they lapped against the brown rocks, she could see little sparks and flashes of phosphorescent light. As far as eye could reach, the sea stretched away in a moonlit shimmer, over-arched by a silver sky—a dream-picture of serenity and chastened glory.

And there, on the edge of the cliff, stood Raoul—a motionless, black figure silhouetted against the sky.

What was he thinking of? she wondered. Not of her. Probably of his new hamlet, or of his beloved sea in its beauty. To-night she almost felt a wish to be with him, out in the effulgent moonlight, close to that wide, quiet ocean.

Then her thoughts flew back to Paris and to what would be taking place at the Theatre —— at this very hour. Some other woman would be playing the part that Denise had “created;” most likely Madame Médard, who was at least thirty-five inches round the waist, and whose voice always cracked when she tried to be passionate. This was just the time of the most telling scene in the play, when Denise had always been confident of rousing the enthusiasm of the audience until their applause had made her nerves thrill with proud excitement.

How glorious it had been! How different from the present!

Yet, something in her inner consciousness told her that this, in its peaceful loveliness and quietude, possessed a healthier, purer charm, than the glare and glitter of that other life; that the influence of the one might be to refine and elevate, and of the other to harden and degrade.

But Denise did not profess to be good, or to care for being elevated. To her, goodness meant Mademoiselle Mathilde with a severe upper lip and Quaker garments; prim gatherings at prim houses of prim old maids, who criticised and condescended, and hinted at scandals which they dared not openly express in words. In short, goodness and a provincial town were to her synonymous terms, and what was a provincial town but a nightmare of dead monotony?

There were two figures on the promontory now. One tall and strong and robust; the other small and delicate as that of a girl of thirteen.

Denise smiled to herself.

"There is that Yvonne Hévin. Now, why did not Raoul marry her? She adores him. And, at least, she is a Kernéwote!"

CHAPTER V.

YVONNE.

"So you have come back, Raoul, and brought her with you? Had she grown tired of Paris already?"

Raoul started, a little surprised at hearing himself addressed by a woman's voice at that hour and in that place. But when he saw the elf-like little figure by his side, he only laughed indulgently, and held out his hand.

It was Yvonne Hévin; and nothing that Yvonne did ever excited surprise. She was one of those privileged people to whom ordinary rules do not apply, thanks to their utter indifference to the opinion of the world at large.

"Well, little witch?" he said. "What are you doing out here at a time when I am certain Mademoiselle Mathilde expects you to be safely in bed? But you are right. You and I are Bretons. We are not afraid of a little night dew."

"You and I—no," she answered. Then after a suggestive pause: "Madame is not with you."

"Denise is tired. We had a detestably long journey," said Raoul, rather coldly, annoyed by a tone of malicious contempt in the girl's voice.

"The homeward journey with one we love is never long," said Yvonne slowly, fixing her great, searching eyes on his face. "It is the journey to strange places, to live amongst strangers, that is long and wearisome as eternity."

"How can you tell? You have never been farther than Quimper, or perhaps to the Pardon at Pont Aven."

"I have been as far as you have—perhaps farther," she said with a mocking laugh. "We do not always bring back treasures after our journeys, do we? At the best they are only roses covered thickly with thorns."

She was a strange, interesting little figure, as she stood before him in the moonlight; small and lithe as a fay, with long, dark eyes, deeply set under straight black brows and masses of dusky hair. It was a true Breton type of face, serious almost to moroseness. But she had a curious, weird beauty of her own, and a grace of movement that, in spite of her picturesque peasant dress, showed her to be a lady by birth. It was only under daily protest from her strait-laced aunt that she was suffered to run wild in a costume that was so entirely opposed to Mademoiselle Mathilde's notions of the fitness of things. The only argument that

could be adduced in its favour was that it had the merit of being economical.

Raoul and Yvonne had been companions since childhood, almost like brother and sister. Perhaps it was partly his fault that she had grown up what Mademoiselle Mathilde considered "barbarously unladylike;" and if the latter had not harboured a secret, but confident expectation that the boy and girl friendship would end in Yvonne's elevation to the proud position of Madame de Kériadec, the girl's liberty would have been speedily nipped in the bud.

It was in the nature of things that since Raoul's marriage he had been too much pre-occupied, to say nothing of being too much in love with his wife, to wish for any society but hers; and, from the first, Yvonne Hévin had evinced her scornful disapprobation of his choice. It was bad enough that he, Raoul de Kériadec, had not chosen a wife from amongst his own people—a Bretonne, a Kernéwote. But a Parisienne! Could any term be more condemnatory? And such a typical Parisienne, who tried to walk along the chemins creux with heels at least two inches high, who sat most of the day at home with her idle white hands in her lap, and who had the unpardonable audacity to despise the people of Brittany as uncivilised savages! Raoul was too well aware of Yvonne's opinions not to understand her little insinuations. Formerly, he had let them pass as the foolish ebullitions of a child's half-jealous prejudice. But now, his consciousness that if she knew all she would have just cause for triumph, made him unusually touchy on the subject.

"I have never heard that, even in Brittany, you can find roses *without* thorns," he answered to her last remark. "In a great many places, on the contrary, you will never find anything but gorse bushes, which are as pleasant to touch as a hedgehog. You are not very accurate in your poetical similitudes."

"Ah! Even in that she has succeeded," cried the girl passionately; "she has made you, like herself, a dainty Parisian. It is because you are a man; and all men are weak and fickle, led by a woman's hair. But that *you* should turn upon your native country—the only country in France that can raise true men and women, instead of dolls and puppets to dance in the world's puppet show! What is there in her that has made you so weak—so weak—such a fool?"

"Dame! It is you who are mad," said Raoul impatiently; "you do not know what you are saying. Breton? Yes; I am a Breton. But that does not make me so intolerant that I think nothing good that does not come from Brittany. You certainly do not encourage one to believe that common sense, generosity, or even civility can be learnt by staying at home. What is the matter with you?"

The girl covered her face with her hands for a moment. When

she took them away the anger had left her eyes, and there was a pitiful wistfulness in their dark depths that made Raoul ashamed of his own anger. After all, she was but an untutored child of Nature, as irresponsible for her wayward tempers as the birds of the air are for their spontaneity of melodiousness.

"Come, Yvonne, we will not quarrel," he said kindly; "only remember that there are certain subjects on which I have a right to be angry. Now it is time you went home; unless you are waiting to see the *Lavandières de la Nuit*, or something of that sort. It is a fine night for weaving spells out of moonbeams. Good night, petite."

"You are not angry with me, then?" she asked humbly. "I deserve it. But, yes, you are right; and I am little better than a savage. But I could not help it, Raoul. My words ran away with me. Ah; it is you who cannot understand."

"Understand you? Not always, *ma foi*," he laughed carelessly; "it is only Yvonne's way. We all know that. But run along home. Some day, soon, I will take you for a sail in the *Bon Espoir*."

Again the irrepressible taunt flashed into her eyes.

"And madame?"

He shrugged his shoulders, annoyed at the question. But before he could answer the light figure had darted away over the short, stunted grass that was gleaming silver, now, in the moonlight.

Her home was situated on the edge of the cliff, not far from where they had been talking, on one of the bleakest spots ever selected for the site of a house. According to Mademoiselle Mathilde it was in momentary peril of subsiding into the sea beneath its windows; it met the full force of the winter winds, no matter from what direction they blew; in summer there was not a particle of foliage to give shelter from the scorching sun; it was deplorably desolate, and hopelessly distant from any pretence of respectable society. In fact, it was unsuitable, in every conceivable respect, for the residence of two gentlewomen who had every right to hold their heads high in the most fashionable circles of Quimper.

Yvonne, on the other hand, loved the quaint little house, with its black oak rafters and old-world air of decay and loneliness; loved to hear the wind shrieking round the gables and down the chimneys, and the waves roaring at the foot of the cliff; whilst, from the front windows, nothing could be seen but a waste of wild grey sea under a wild grey sky.

Her own room was a corner one, with a tiny lattice high up in the wall overlooking the sea, and a larger window opposite commanding an inland view. From the former she could see the old Chapelle de Notre Dame du Salut on the very extremity of the promontory. Rough steps, hewn in the cliff, led up to it from the beach, and that it was a favourite resort of the fishermen of the neighbouring villages was testified by the quantity of rustic carvings

of ships and fish, hung as votive offerings round the porch or cut out in the grey stone. Here, too, was the burial place of the de Kériadecs, from the famous Josselin of Pont l'Abbé to the later hero of the house, on whose tomb was inscribed :

"Cy : gist : le cœur : de Gesril : Sieur de Kériadec ;" and, sculptured underneath the engraved arms of the de Kériadecs, two lines out of the well-known commandements of the Chouanerie :

Né Breton, tu n'oublieras
Afin d'agir loyalement.

Close to the Chapelle stood a Menhir, surmounted by a rude iron cross, which to Yvonne Hévin, at least, was no mere symbol, but an object of devoutest and purest veneration.

But this was not all that Yvonne could see from her room. From the other window she could just catch a glimpse of the east wing of the Château, with its Beacon Tower ; and it was a fancy of hers that, at night, some portion of its light always fell upon her little room, keeping her safe from bodily and spiritual harm as though by a magic spell.

Every night before she went to sleep she said her prayers to the Beacon light. Perhaps there was something verging on idolatry both in the deed and in the unconfessed motive of it. She did not mean it as such ; but it seemed to her so much nearer, so much warmer, so much more sympathetic than that God in Heaven whom she could not see, and whose anger with those who offended Him she had been taught to look upon as so hard and merciless in its potency.

To-night, when she left Raoul she ran straight home, and creeping stealthily upstairs, that her aunt might not hear and waylay her, shut herself into her room and flung herself upon the little oaken Prie-Dieu that always stood close to the window facing the Château.

"No. He does not understand. He thinks it is only my evil temper that makes me so rude and bitter," she cried to herself. "He does not understand that it makes me wild with grief to see him so changed and grave, with such pain and regret in his eyes. And then to know that it is *her* fault ; that she is killing the life out of his heart with her bad, cruel ways. Ah ! Mon Dieu, mon Dieu ! If I could but help him to undo his own folly, and save him from the trouble that is coming."

Her heart was bursting with conflicting emotions—love, hate, anger, she knew not what. A long time she knelt there, her dark hair tumbling over her shoulders, her face buried in her hands. Of what was she thinking that could make the small brown hands work so convulsively, and force such choking sobs from her heaving breast ?

Poor, wild little Yvonne ! She did not realize the folly and the sin of her own thoughts. Yet the feelings that governed her were

such as have wrecked more women's lives than any other passions under the sun ; the love "strong as death ;" the jealousy, "cruel as the grave ;" and in her case they were the more dangerous because, in her ignorance of their nature, she gave way to them without let or hindrance.

Yvonne Hévin's father was a sea-captain, with a restless, adventurous nature that never suffered him to remain more than a week or two at home, during the flying visits he paid to France every three or four years. He was fond of Yvonne, in his way, and would have refused her nothing she chose to ask for ; but even for her sake he could not stay ashore, cramped up in a little Breton village, whilst the vast seas and countries of other climes offered him constant change and adventure.

Thus it was that his sister, Mademoiselle Mathilde, was entrusted with the care of Yvonne in the old house by the sea. She was a soured, narrow-minded old maid, who would have crushed gaiety and spirits out of most children, and who, if she had had her way, would have drilled Yvonne into a smaller edition of herself. But Monsieur le Capitaine stipulated above all things that the girl should be allowed to amuse herself in her own way ; and if that way consisted in running, wild and free as a bird, over the rocks and sands of her native coasts, well, so much the better, he argued, for her health and temper. He liked to see his own roving disposition mirrored in his little girl, with her fearless eyes and active limbs ; and he pooh-poohed Mademoiselle Mathilde's complaints of the impropriety in this mode of bringing up a "jeune demoiselle," by declaring that he preferred his "garçonette" to the most accomplished demoiselle in France.

Not that Yvonne grew up totally uneducated. She could not do fancy work or play the piano, or sing anything but the weird ballads of Brittany ; and she had none of the drawing-room dignity of composure and little airs and graces that may be acquired in a convent for young ladies. But she had read a great deal of miscellaneous literature. Whenever her father asked what present he should bring her, she answered, "Books ;" and he had never come home without being accompanied by a large box from Paris, filled with standard works—history, travels and poetry, to be pored and pondered over by Yvonne for days and months, until he came again with a fresh supply. In this way she learnt far more than it was possible to do from good, dull Monsieur Jacques Bouvier, who came twice a-week from Andierne to instruct her in arithmetic, geography, and such sciences as were considered requisite for her mental improvement.

Mademoiselle Mathilde herself undertook to superintend her religious instruction, and in this she had few difficulties to contend with. Yvonne, like all true Bretons, was profoundly religious, mingling with her religion a mass of legend and superstition, absorbed into her nature partly from her out-of-door rambles and com-

munings with Nature, partly from her intimacy with an ignorant and credulous fisher-folk, who believed in the weird legends of their ghost-haunted Bay of Andierne as implicitly as they believed in the Gospel taught to them by Monsieur le Curé.

Thus Yvonne grew to womanhood, absolutely ignorant of life, beyond what she read of it in books—a strange, passionate-hearted little creature, with the melancholy of the sea in her eyes and full of undeveloped possibilities for good or for evil.

In her monotonous existence, Raoul de Kériadec had been the one bright spot of glowing, vigorous life and buoyancy. He was young and, like Yvonne, companionless. Like her, he revelled in the sea, in the liberty and beauty of Nature, in the glorious excitement of battling with the elements when they raged together in frantic tumult, as they so often did on that storm-bound coast. But, besides this, he possessed lively animal spirits, and a boy's delight in the mere fact of living: he was brave, generous, loyal; and the contagion of his energetic verve lifted Yvonne out of her quiet dreaminess and taught her, when with him, to be thoughtless and gay, as all young things ought to be, at times.

She did not share Mademoiselle Mathilde's lofty expectations; such a thought never entered her head. But she did regard Raoul as, in some sort of way, her own especial possession. He was all in all to her, and she doubted not that she, in her turn, was all in all to him. It never occurred to her that any other woman could step between them and put a check on their golden days together, or that she could ever cease to be his favourite companion and the confidant of all his thoughts.

His engagement to Denise came upon her like a thunderbolt. She did not realise all that it implied; all the change it would make in her life. She was only conscious of a vague trouble and aching at her heart, that grew heavier day by day. O, the loneliness of that first year after his marriage! The sense of being of no account to any human being in the world. The weariness of long rambles by sea and shore without the well-loved companion. The humiliation of being forgotten for the sake of a fairer face, of being left alone, as it were, in her old solitary world, whilst he passed on into one which was, to her, something strange and new and mysterious, in which she could have no part.

All this she could have forgiven, if it had contributed to Raoul's happiness; but it soon became common talk that the domestic annals of the de Kériadecs were not altogether peaceful; and Yvonne's woman's wit quickly divined much that was left untold. Her indignant, loving eyes noted every change in Raoul, and his gradually-increasing moroseness and despair. She knew that he was miserable, and that it was his wife who made him so.

So she hated Denise with the bitter, unreasonable dislike of an ill-used child who sees an unworthy rival put forward in her place;

hated her all the more deeply for her very beauty and the soft charm of manner that, to Yvonne's impressionable imagination, was so vividly fascinating. Sometimes she could scarcely steel herself against Denise's genial kindness, the irresistible captivation that had conquered less vulnerable hearts than that of the wild little Breton maid. At such times she would remind herself of what she considered Raoul's betrayal by this fair sorceress, who was charming away his heart with a deliberate delight in witnessing his sufferings under the process, and then she was able to hate her again.

Some such thoughts were rushing through Yvonne's brain as she knelt at her Prie-Dieu that night, after parting with Raoul. Perhaps she thought she was praying, for her eyes were fixed on the Beacon, her lips were moving, and once or twice she made the sign of the cross; but if so, it was to a God of Darkness rather than to a God of Light.

So absorbed was she that she did not hear the door of her room open quietly, and a figure steal up behind her. It was Mademoiselle Mathilde, come to see if her niece was safely in bed—an office that, now and then, she thought it incumbent on her authority to assume. When she saw the girl kneeling there, in that passionate attitude of abandonment, she paused, looking at her in silence: a tall and spare figure in a straight dark gown, with a colourless, severe face, and narrow lips pressed together with a rigidity that gave something of cruelty to her expression. She glanced from Yvonne to the Beacon Tower, where a brightly-flashing light shone yellow in the moonlight.

"*Dieu te garde*," prayed the girl half aloud.

They were her last words every night, spoken with a firm, religious faith that they would keep the one she loved from evil. But, to-night she still remained on her knees for a few seconds, the soft tenderness in her eyes slowly changing to a revengeful anger.

"*Dieu te sauve*," she added swiftly through her trembling lips.

"Yvonne," broke in Mademoiselle Mathilde; "Yvonne! What are you doing?"

"Cannot you see? I was praying," said Yvonne, springing from her knees. "Cannot you leave me in peace even for that?"

Mademoiselle smiled her hard, cynical smile.

"Ma foi," she said grimly; "if that is how you look when you are praying, what would you be if you were cursing?"

(*To be continued.*)

RED RIVER GULLY.

THE camp-fire burnt low one clear summer evening ; the full moon had risen, and, as she floated through the banks of fleecy clouds, cast her reflection on the lake in a golden path of rays that stretched from shore to shore.

"Tell you a story? Wall, I guess I kin," said the old hunter, looking round the circle with alert, bright eyes. "You boys always does want amusin' at this time o' night. 'Red River Gully,' you say. Wall, I 'spose I'd as soon tell you that as anythin' else."

He cast a keen glance at us, to be sure he should have our attention, and, to humour him, we feigned to move closer, that we might not lose a word. His weather-beaten face relaxed into a smile ; he was a born narrator, and loved a sympathetic audience.

"I warn't much over twenty, I guess, boys, when I fell in with a crowd as wanted to go out a gold diggin' to 'Red River Gully,' out theer to the Black Hill region. Wall, I hadn't no objections to makin' money easy, and we was told as we'd nothin' to do but pull the nuggets out of the earth as fast as we could dig 'em. So off I goes along with the rest of our boys from old Vermont State. We soon found out as we had to work harder than we'd ever done in our lives before ; and though there was some as found considerable of gold along there, I warn't one of them ; and so I kinder lost heart, and I took up with some fellows as made a better livin' out of huntin' than gold diggin'. I had a good enough time after that.

"The diggers, as a rule, was a pritty rough set—pritty rough they was, and there was some on 'em a sight wuss than t'others. We called 'em, or, they called themselves, the 'Devil's Own ;' and they lived together—about a dozen they was—in a shanty a mile from where the rest of us herded together at the mouth of the Gully. Dick Kent, he was the leader of the gang ; folks said as how he'd come of a proud Boston family, and had been a Harvard graduate ; and they suspected he'd changed his name. Wall, he was a wild one, was Dick ; a big fellow, with fierce, black eyes, and a long beard, and a power over t'others as made you almost think folks was right when they said the Devil himself had got into Dick Kent. That, sirs, was Dick as I first knowed him in 'Red River Gully.'

"One day, as I was out huntin', I come on a log cabin, pritty near hidden by the trees as growed on the cliffs, about three miles from the mouth of the Gully. I was so curious to know who could be living there, that I went up to the door to beg a drink of water. There was no one there, boys, but a little gal of about seven years of age, and very small for that ; a purty little gal she was, with hair curlin' all over her head in golden rings. I was used to my Prayer

Book in them days, and, thinks I, 'She's like the cherubim as we sings about at church.' She was a simple, trusting child, and she soon told me all she knew of her own story. Her mother had been dead only a few weeks; father had gone down to the Gully to get gold, and had never come back; and brother Ralph took care of her, and was out in the woods hunting. I met the boy soon after, trying to sell some birds in the village. He was a fine fellow, and he'd never told the child as the father—a drunken ne'er-do-well—had fallen over a precipice, and been killed. Ralph, he was tryin' to make money enough to take his little sister back East.

"Wall, when I got back to camp, I began a-tellin' of the find I'd made up there on the cliff, when a rough voice growled:

" 'Git out there—a-talkin' about yaller-haired gals.'

"As sure as you're alive, 'twas Black Joe, one of the 'Devil's Own.'

"Wall, I shet up. I was but young, you know, and as soon and as often as I could, I'd go up the cliff and take something for that poor lone child. I'd about made up my mind to tell the story round, and get up a pile for the two children, when the Lord see fit to take the matter into His own hand—and this was jest what happened.

"I was a-comin' home one afternoon, when the sky clouded up, and all at once a hurricane struck the valley; 'twas a kind of cloud-burst, too, and torrents began to pour down the Gully. The river rushed on at flood-tide, and the trees come crashin' down at such a rate as made me look pretty keen for a place to shelter in. Seeing a light near at hand, I made a dash for it, but when my foot was on the threshold of the door, I knew I'd got right into the shanty of the 'Devil's Own.'

"They was civil to me, though, and give me a seat by the fire, but they was a swearin' pretty considerable about the wash out that had driven them from their work. They took little notice of me after the first, and I sat on a log and tried to get myself dry. As soon as 'twas dark they lit their lamps, pulled out cards and dice, and began gambling and brawling, jest as I'd hearn they did. The rain and wind was over by dark; but I got so interested watchin' them fellows that I kept my seat by the fire. I was jest thinkin' what a fierce, wild ruffian that Dick Kent was, and wondering why t'others looked up to him so, when he turns to me an' says:

" 'Boy, you'd better go. This is no place for such as you.'

"There was something in his wonderful eyes as he spoke that went to my heart. I was afraid of him no longer. I wanted to stay with him, somehow. 'Go!' he says again. This time I got up, and strapped on my rifle. Wall, just at that instant I hearn a low tap at the door; so did Dick; he turns round sharp and cocks his revolver.

"The door was gently pushed back, and there on the threshold stood that little, yaller-haired gal.

"The men stopped brawlin' as if they'd been struck dumb, and

some on 'em hid the cards and dice as though the angel of the Lord had come to shame them of their evil ways, and no one spoke a word. She stood there lookin' with her blue eyes from one fierce face to another, her dress all soakin' wet, and her bare feet cut and bleedin', and her curls a-layin' all damp on her neck. And while we was all a starin' at her she began and told her story. The wind had blown the trees down on their house, and Ralph was struck down and held somehow by one or the other, and the little creature, finding she could do nothing to help him, had set off down the Gully all alone to find someone who would go to his rescue.

"The angel of the Lord must have led her, boys, for the path was washed away and torrents was pourin' from the cliffs, and rocks was fallin' round, displaced by that great cloud-burst; but here she was, and a miracle, I say again, as ever that tiny child reached the 'Devil's Own' alive.

"Six of them devils got up and took their rifles.

"'Coyotes,' they said meaningly to Dick, 'we can't get there in time.' But they went all the same, and a terrible time they had of it, climbing them cliffs and carrying that poor lad down afterwards; for they did get there in time, boys, and though Ralph was badly hurt they doctored him up amongst them, and he's a living man in Boston city to-day.

"Wall, I've kept that little angel standin' a long time at the door, but reely 'twarnt a minute before Dick Kent had her on his knee by the fire, and Black Joe—he brought a tin bowl of warm water, and tenderly bathed the bleeding little feet, and I seen a tear fall into the water as he bent over the child. The rest of the men they crowded round, and there warn't one but tried to do something for her. Dick Kent he kept her in his arms, and she nestled up to him as if she'd known him all her life, and I seen tears in eyes as I shouldn't have thought would ever have shed the tear of pity in this world again.

"One of them Devils went down to the village an' spent his day's earnings a-buyin' bread and milk, and the t'others was most jealous when he come back, and began feedin' the child. She ate and drank as if she'd been famished, and Dick he took up one of her little hands and held it to the light, and I seen a look come over his face as made all the fierceness die out of it. Somehow I warn't afraid to see that child a-clingin' to him; I guessed she'd found a friend in Dick Kent.

"Before the men came back with her brother, she fell asleep with her head on Dick's breast, her yaller hair curlin' in rings over his rough coat. The men sat round starin' at her.

"'There aint no place here fit to lay her down on,' said one of them, at last. They looked round the hovel, which had contented them ere this, with supreme disgust.

"'And it aint a fit place for her when she wakes up,' said another.

"'That's so,' said a chorus of voices.

" 'I've got one 'bout that size, I guess,' said a voice, so husky that the men hardly recognised it.

" Reproachful eyes were turned on him.

" 'If I'd got one I shouldn't be here, foolin',' growled Kent.

" 'Nor I,' said a chorus of voices.

" 'Them as has women-folk and children to home, ain't no business in Red River Gully,' said Black Joe, bending a gloomy look on the fire. I learnt afterwards as he'd lost his wife and two purty children before ever he come to the gold-diggin's.

" 'I guess I'll go and see my old mother,' said one of the men, with an uneasy look at Dick Kent.

" 'Yes! Go,' says he; 'and as God sees you, never come back to this place no more.'

Soon after this one of the men, as had been a sailor, turned over the table, and made a place there as would do for a bed for the child, and just then the other fellers come in carrying Ralph, and I had to go back to the camp; so I didn't see no more that night.

" Wall, boys, there wasn't no 'Devil's Own' after that. Dick Kent, he'd had good luck, and had made considerable, and as soon as the boy was well enough to travel, he set out with them two children and took 'em to Boston. The relatives there looked pretty shy on them, and wanted to send little Milly to some institution; but Dick he wouldn't hear of it, and he adopted both of 'em.

" I was to Boston some years ago, and I seen Kent one Sunday mornin' a-goin' to church. I follows after and slips in, and takes a good look at him. I seen Milly and a fine fellow, her husband, I suppose, there, and some children, and there was one little, yaller-haired gal as sat close to Kent, and as he seemed to watch over like the apple of his eye. She was but a bit of a creature, and before the service was over she was asleep with her head on Dick's breast. Her mother, a beautiful woman she'd growed to be, smiled round at her husband, as if 'twas very pleasant to her to see her old friend a carin' for the child. Wall, wall, I seemed to forget I was in church. All as I could see was a little child, sleepin' in those same arms amidst those reckless men as called themselves the 'Devil's Own.'

" Perhaps 'twas my thinking so much of him as made Dick turn round and take a long look at me with his deep black eyes. I could not tell if he knowed me, till we come out of church, and he put his hand on my shoulder and spoke to me. That warn't all; he took me home with him, and I guess I stayed a week in his beautiful house. Long enough, boys, to see that the Lord had done His work in His own way, and the night as brought that little child safe to the door of the 'Devil's Own,' brought also an angel of light to the heart of Dick Kent, and, maybe, others of that gang."

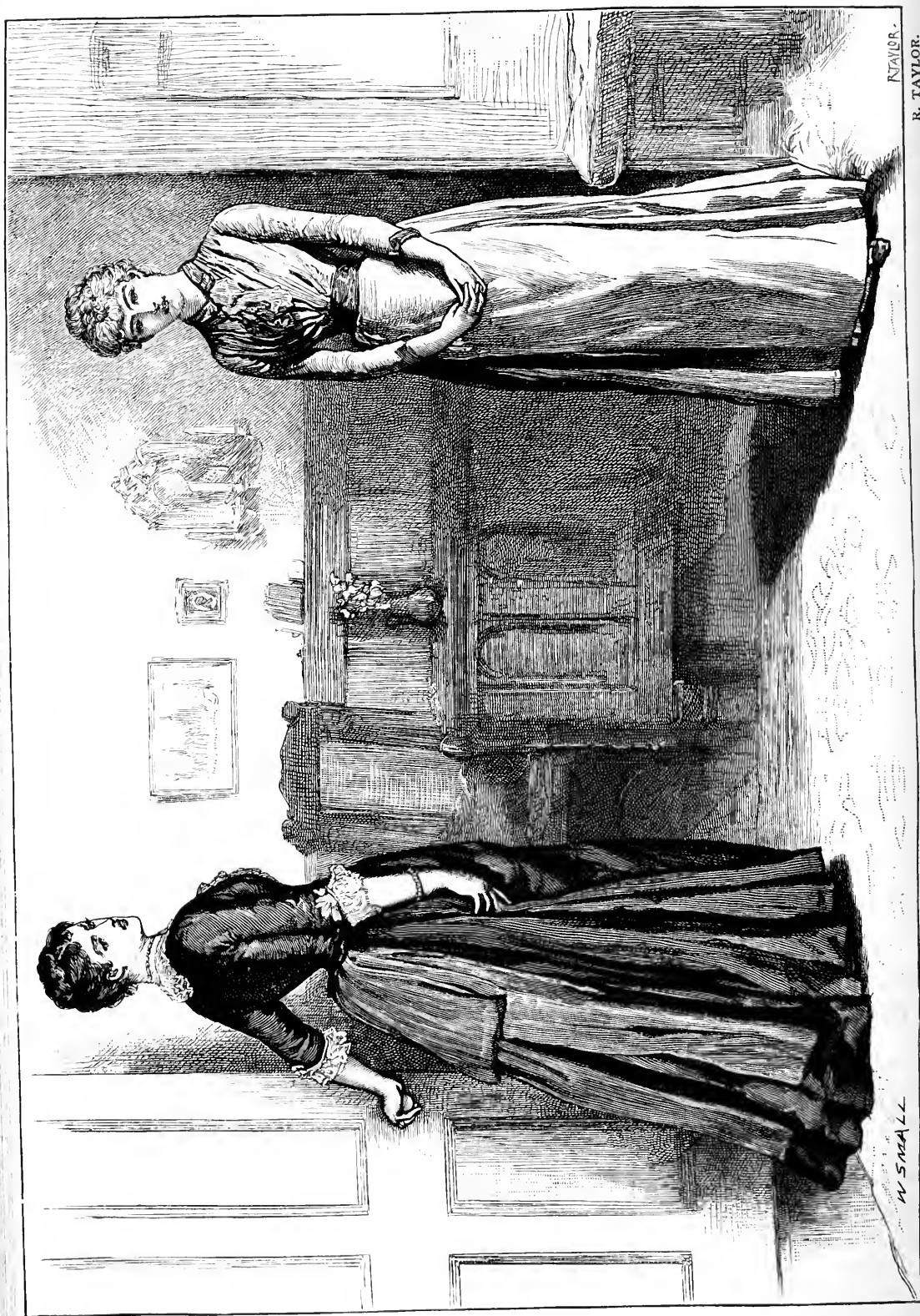
BETWEEN THE LIGHTS.

ERE the westward fires have faded,
 While the distant hills yet glow
 With the sun's last benediction,
 Where he lingers loath to go ;
 While the birds are homeward flying
 Ere the dark their way benights,
 And the vesper bells are ringing,
 Comes the hour between the lights.

Ah, the mem'ries dear and holy,
 Bright and tender, that combine
 In life's after hours, its moments,
 In our heart of hearts to shrine !
 For our sweetest dreams come to us,
 While the daylight slowly dies,
 And our sweetest words are uttered
 'Neath the purple gloaming skies.

Blithesome lads, and bonnie lasses,
 How I hope and pray for you,
 Only mem'ries bright and holy,
 Only joys deep, pure and true,
 May be yours while vesper glory
 Falling night with day unites,
 Only happy thoughts to hallow
 The dear hour "between the lights."

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.



W. SMALL.

REPROD.

R. TAYLOR.

W. SMALL.

AND FIND YOUR NEW ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR KATHERINE."

CHAPTER XXV.

MRS. RYOT-TEMPEST IS BAFFLED.

NATURE is capricious, never more capricious than in matters of climate. She will spoil what might have been a soft, balmy spring day with a cold east wind, she will give us snow in June and thunder in December, rain when we don't want it and drought when we want rain. The day on which the Archdeacon started for his first visitation, leaving Vera at home to the tender mercies of her step-mother, was an April day; the sun was shining brightly but the wind was east, therefore cold, cutting, cruel.

The Archdeacon was a chilly mortal and would have enjoyed the warm, genial, April sun but for the cold blasts which every now and then made him shiver. As he rode to the station the sun and the wind reminded him of the two women he had left at home. The sun was like his bright, beautiful Vera; and, oh, how happy he might have been with her but for Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, the east wind of his hearth and home.

When he left the Rectory, Vera went to her own sitting-room. It was the room which had been her mother's, and as the present Mrs. Ryot-Tempest rarely entered it Vera felt safe from intrusion, and decided to order her luncheon to be brought to her there instead of going out as her father had suggested, for she was not feeling at all well, nor in the mood for visiting.

She could think of nothing but the diamonds and the gross accusation Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had brought against her, and as she sat thinking over the matter it occurred to her that her defence was very weak. All the evidence was strongly against her. Who was to prove she had been walking in her sleep?

True, Norah Canter and Reuben Foreman could bear witness she had done so on former occasions, but who was to prove she had done so the night of the robbery? The more she thought of it all the less

she liked it, and she began to wish with all her heart that her father had not left her at home that morning. Suppose what Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had said at breakfast was no vain threat. Suppose Mark Brown should summon her ; suppose he should do so in her father's absence ?

Her ideas as to what would happen in this last event were exceedingly vague ; but unpleasant visions of policemen and handcuffs, warrants and gaols, floated through her mind as she sat gazing out on the lovely view from the window, when suddenly the door opened and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest walked into the room.

Her mission was to direct Vera's course by means of persuasion ; that silken power which Plato defines as "the helm of the soul." Vera, however, was a delicate craft, difficult to navigate. She did not always choose to answer to her helm, particularly if her step-mother's hand were upon it, but preferred to steer her own course ; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest feared she would prove unmanageable on this occasion. If Vera had been a man Mrs. Ryot-Tempest would have been more hopeful of success, for then all the wiles she had it in her power to exercise would have told in her favour ; but these arts were all lost on one of her own sex, and in Vera's case would go against her.

For these two women might be likened to the magnetic poles, at which two opposite energies, positive and negative, accumulate. They were charged with the opposite energies of truth and falsehood. In Vera truth was centred ; in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest falsehood was accumulated. Now the electrical equilibrium between these two energies can, we know, be restored ; but the moral equilibrium between these women could never be adjusted ; truth and falsehood can never flow in the same current any more than light and darkness can co-exist in the same place.

"Vera," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, as Vera rose from the window-sill on which she had been lounging and stood facing her step-mother : "Vera, I have come as a friend to help you in this trouble and to assure you that if you will do as your father and I desire I will see that no further steps are taken in this matter. I will make no effort to recover my diamonds, but for your sake I will sacrifice them, and in fact do my utmost to hush up the scandal."

As she spoke she sank gracefully on to a sofa, an action which irritated Vera even more than her words, for it seemed to assert her right to invade her step-daughter's privacy. "Mrs. Tempest," replied Vera coldly, "my father has been obliged to leave me at home to-day, but before he went he desired me to avoid you ; on his return he will no doubt discuss the robbery with you ; meanwhile I can assure you neither he nor I desire or intend to hush it up, but I decline to say anything more to you about it. If you remain here I must leave the room."

"Not until you hear what I have to say," interrupted Mrs. Ryot-

Tempest, barring Vera's progress to the door. "Give up Captain Raleigh and marry Mr. Hastings and you shall never hear another word about the diamonds ; I will forgive you entirely."

"You have nothing to forgive," angrily interrupted Vera.

"Refuse to do this," continued Mrs. Tempest, totally ignoring the interruption, "and before your father returns you will be arrested ; Mark Brown is gone to take out a summons against you for wounding him with intent to kill, a crime punishable by penal servitude. I expect him back before luncheon with the police and a warrant for your arrest."

Vera turned pale as death on hearing this news, but she did not lose her presence of mind although she felt sure this woman was capable of seeing her led off to prison on a false charge in her father's absence ; indeed, she suspected her step-mother had urged him to go out in order to deprive his child of his protection. She summoned all the courage she possessed to her aid and answered quietly :

"They can arrest me if they choose ; my father will find bail for me on his return."

"There is no need to put him to that trouble ; give up Captain Raleigh and I repeat I will buy Mark's silence," said Mrs. Tempest.

"Thank you," scornfully answered Vera.

"You refuse ?"

"I do."

"Then I hope you will appreciate prison fare and find your new quarters comfortable."

And with this parting sarcasm, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest sailed out of the room. As she passed Vera's bedroom on her way downstairs she locked the door and put the key in her pocket, for it occurred to her Vera might take it into her head to leave the house to escape the police, in which case she would want her hat and jacket, without which she could not go far in the cutting east wind now blowing.

This was between eleven and twelve o'clock and Mark could not be expected back much before one. That he would be successful in obtaining the warrant his mistress had little doubt, but she was impatient for his return ; so time, the moving image of eternity, moved very slowly with her that morning as she sat trying to read, but really gloating over her own cleverness in thus checkmating Vera so thoroughly. Her congratulations turned out to be somewhat premature in the sequel, for the game was not yet won. She had cried "check" to Vera's queen, but it was Vera's turn to move, and before the "moving image" had passed noon the queen was safe from her adversary's assaults.

Shortly before one o'clock Mark Brown returned to the Rectory accompanied by two policemen, one of whom carried a warrant for the arrest of Vera Ryot-Tempest on a charge of wounding with intent to kill. Mark had had some difficulty in obtaining this warrant, but he made his depositions so clearly, and was able to back

up his accusation by the circumstantial evidence of his wounded arm, as well as by producing Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's letter which supported his case so strongly, that in the end the summons was granted, the warrant signed, and Mark sent home triumphant. Now he would have his revenge. Miss Vera had helped to separate him from Janet, now he would separate her from the Captain; now he would have the pleasure of seeing her taken off to prison; and as he reached the Rectory his excitement was so intense he could scarcely contain himself.

"The Archdeacon is not at home," said the butler as he opened the door.

"We don't want the master; it is Miss Vera we want for shooting me," said Mark.

"Pity she didn't kill you if she had anything to do with it, which I don't believe she had," said the butler, leaving the policemen and Mark to conduct their own business whilst he went to the kitchen to tell the other servants he washed his hands of the whole matter.

Mark, thus left to his own resources, went to the drawing-room to inform his mistress that the police were in the hall waiting for Miss Vera.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest turned a shade paler on hearing this, for she now began to fear the consequences if Vera refused to consent to her conditions. What would the Archdeacon say if he returned to find his daughter arrested in his absence? What would the neighbours say—the parishioners, Mrs. Grundy, Captain Raleigh, Captain Tempest; and last, but not least, Mrs. Canter?

"Mark, if Miss Vera confesses where the diamonds are and that you are quite innocent of any part in the robbery will you agree not to prosecute her if I make it worth your while?"

Mark's countenance fell; a look of hatred came over it, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest saw she would have to pay heavily to stop this marriage; but she was prepared to do this if only Vera could be persuaded to give it up.

"Fifty pounds is a nice little sum, Mark. Will you do it for that?"

"No, ma'am. I'm sorry for you and the master, but I shall never be the same man again after this accident; it is worth a good hundred pounds to me," he replied decidedly.

"Very well. I will go to Miss Vera and see what I can do with her. If she agrees to my conditions I will draw you out a cheque for a hundred pounds on condition that you leave here to-day and withdraw your accusation. You understand?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mark surlily; for, tempting as the offer was, he was more than half inclined to refuse it; but the fear of Freeman turning Queen's evidence prevented him.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest left the drawing-room and went up to Vera's sitting-room to try what effect the news that the police were in the hall waiting to take her to prison would have upon her, but to her

dismay the room was empty. She hastily searched the rest of the upstairs rooms, but in vain ; no Vera was there. She called her ; no response ; she went downstairs and looked in all the rooms there ; but no Vera was to be found. Her garden hat hung in the hall, so it was not probable she was there. She rang the drawing-room bell and inquired if any of the servants knew where Miss Vera was.

The butler did not ; he had not seen her since the morning ; but he would make inquiries of the other servants. He did so, and returned to say no one knew where Miss Tempest was. She had ordered Mary to take her luncheon to her in her own sitting-room, but Mary had not seen her since she gave this order at about eleven o'clock.

"Perhaps she has gone into the village," suggested the butler.

"Impossible ; she has left her hats all at home ; she must be in the house somewhere. Sound the gong for luncheon, perhaps that will bring her ; and ask the policemen into the study," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, beginning to fear her prey might escape her after all.

She did not think it possible Vera could have left the house, but she thought she was probably hiding in some out-of-the-way corner, and as there were many good hiding-places in the rambling old house it was just possible she might succeed in concealing herself until the Archdeacon returned unless a very strict search were made. The policemen were now consulted, and by their advice the servants were all questioned separately as to when and where they had last seen Miss Vera. While Mrs. Ryot-Tempest and one police man conducted this inquiry, Mark Brown and the other searched first the house from attic to basement, then the stables, and finally the garden, but not a trace of Vera was to be seen.

The inquiry among the servants proved equally futile. All that was elicited was that Mary had met one of the nuns from the convent, who occasionally called on Vera, going downstairs from Miss Vera's sitting-room about twelve o'clock. She had not let her in. She believed Miss Vera went to the door herself, as no doubt she saw the nun coming from her window.

"She must be at the convent, then ; no doubt she went out with the nun, only Mary refuses to confess she saw her. Let Mark go down to the convent and inquire if she is there," said Mrs. Tempest.

This errand was a work after Mark's own heart, and he lost no time in performing it, but it proved fruitless. The nuns had not seen Vera for some weeks. She very rarely went to the convent as her father disapproved of her going there, and what was still more strange none of the nuns had been out that day, so it was quite impossible Mary could have seen one of them. Mary persisted in her story ; she was certain she had seen a nun go down the staircase. If it was not a living nun it was a ghost ; and to celebrate the visit of so rare

and distinguished a visitor with befitting solemnity, she went into violent hysterics ; which attack so absorbed the attention of the other female servants that Mark and the police were left to conduct their search for Vera alone, the butler flatly refusing to have anything to do with the matter.

The policemen were by no means energetic, for neither of them in the least believed that Vera, whom they had known from a child, was guilty, and they privately hoped the Archdeacon would return before she was discovered and find bail for her, and thus relieve them of the necessity of arresting her. The Archdeacon was not expected home until four o'clock, but he returned an hour earlier, some presentiment of evil at home having induced him to hurry off by an earlier train. All the day his thoughts had been with Vera and the robbery, and his first visitation was conducted in a very slack manner, so that the Ritualistic Rector who, having heard the new Archdeacon's views were evangelical, had hidden his candlesticks and flower-vases, his chasubles and biretta in his own house, and relegated the fald-stool at which he heard confessions in the vestry to the coal-hole pro tem., considered these good works were supererogatory ; since the Archdeacon, having inquired if the church were insured and the due number of services performed, seemed to consider his duty done and, after a hurried luncheon, took his departure ; leaving the Rector in profound ignorance as to whether he belonged to the High Church, the Low Church, the Broad Church or the No Church school.

On his return he was met in the hall by his wife, who drew him into his study and, with many professions of sympathy, informed him that the police were in the house to arrest Vera, who could not be found.

"Arrest Vera ! Ridiculous, my dear ! She is my daughter, and that is sufficient, I hope ! As if anyone would dare to arrest a Ryot-Tempest ! There is some mistake. Where are the police ?" exclaimed the Archdeacon.

"There is no mistake, Ryot. They have a warrant, which I have seen, for her arrest on a charge of wounding Mark Brown with intent to kill."

"Stuff and nonsense ; he wounded himself. I will soon send these fellows about their business, or if I can't, my solicitor will. I'll have Mark arrested on a counter-charge."

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest turned paler. Her plot was not succeeding, her prey had escaped, her husband was asserting himself in a way she had not deemed him capable of doing ; she must quell this insubordinate spirit ; he must learn he could not take Vera's part against his wife with impunity. She had been magnanimous ; she must show him she could be severe also.

"Do ; but there will still be the charge of robbery to answer," she said quietly.

“What do you mean?”

“That I offered Vera a free pardon and she refused, and has disappeared, presumably with my diamonds, and I intend to prosecute her.”

Her voice faltered during the last part of this sentence, while her trembling hands and now crimson cheeks told how much she was moved, as she thus threw down the gauntlet and declared “war to the knife.” She knew that by thus acting she was losing her hold on her husband, and she would fain have kept him on his knees at her feet; but jealousy was a stronger passion with her than even self-love, so she preferred separating Vera and Captain Raleigh to retaining her husband as her lover.

The Archdeacon listened silently to her last speech. He had felt since the last evening that he had been harbouring a snake in his bosom; now he felt that it had bitten him, and the bite was fatal to his love and a shock to his physical system. He sank wearily into his chair, too much hurt to trust himself to speak, too much afraid of his wife to say what he thought of her conduct, too much astounded to decide at once upon what course he intended to pursue. He did not realise at first that Vera had disappeared. He concluded she had taken his advice and gone out to luncheon, and it was not until his wife reminded him of the fact by asking how he intended to find his daughter that he took in the idea that she was lost.

“Vera is no doubt lunching with the Palmers; I will send for her,” he replied.

“Scarcely likely, seeing that all her outdoor things are in her bedroom; moreover she ordered luncheon to be taken to her room.”

“Then she is there,” said the Archdeacon.

“Excuse me; the house and garden have been searched and she is not to be found.”

The Archdeacon rose to his feet, anxiety for his daughter and repugnance to his wife striving for the mastery over him. The former feeling was the more intense, the latter the more insupportable; and with a look at Mrs. Ryot-Tempest which told her her power over him had gone for ever he said:

“Have the kindness to leave me alone. I should prefer never to see you again were such a course possible.” And having relieved his soul by this outburst he now turned his attention to Vera, about whom he began to feel very anxious.

His wife left him at his request and he rang the bell for the servants, to inquire what had happened in his absence. He then sent to the Palmers to inquire if Vera were there, searching the house himself in the meantime; and finally he came to the conclusion she must have left home in some clothes Mrs. Ryot-Tempest did not know of and gone either to her Uncle George or to Norah Canter; so telegrams were at once despatched to them to ask if she were with either of them.

While awaiting their replies the Archdeacon went to Vera's sitting-room to see if she had left any letter or message for him. He saw nothing of the kind on her writing-table or about the room, and finally he opened an old-fashioned, carved oak chest which had belonged to her mother, and there to his terror and amazement was the dress Vera had worn that morning, her collar and cuffs, a brooch and a pair of high-heeled shoes, all hastily thrown in. A terrible thought occurred to the Archdeacon on seeing these things. Was it possible that the girl, frightened out of her senses at the terrible trouble which had come so suddenly upon her, had committed suicide in a fit of temporary insanity? There was the river and the mill-pool close by: had she jumped into either?

Even so, why leave her shoes and dress at home? The Archdeacon could not understand it. He sent for the two policemen and consulted them; he sent men to drag the mill-pool and river; he sent a second telegram to Captain Tempest asking him to come to him at once; he sent messengers to all their neighbours inquiring if Vera had been seen that day, and he wandered about the house awaiting replies with a pulse beating furiously, a heart aching sorely, a conscience reproaching him bitterly for having left his child alone that morning.

Messenger after messenger returned, but all with the same news: nothing had been heard or seen of Vera. Telegrams from Mrs. Canter and Captain Tempest said the same, and the Archdeacon was working himself into a state of nervous excitement verging on delirium when two telegrams were brought to him.

The first he opened was from his brother, saying he would arrive that evening; the second was from Vera, but it gave him very little information.

"I am safe," was all it said, and it was given in at a London post-office two hours before he received it. No sooner had he read it than he ordered his pony and rode down to the station to inquire what passengers had left by the mid-day train.

"Only one person," was the reply; "one of the nuns from the convent, and she had taken a ticket for London."

This news disconcerted the Archdeacon at first, but as he rode home meditating upon it a light broke upon him, and having put two and two together he arrived at the conclusion that they made four. In other words, he guessed what had happened to Vera, but he resolved to keep his own counsel; at any rate until he had consulted his solicitor, whom he expected shortly; and he hoped between them they would hit on some plan by which he could offer bail for Vera's appearance without revealing her hiding-place.

The lawyer arrived in time for dinner, which for the sake of keeping up appearances before the servants the Archdeacon took with his wife, but it was by no means a lively repast. The lawyer, who knew Vera well, was too much worried by what he saw would be a difficult

case to manage to care to talk, and the Archdeacon was unable either to eat or converse ; so Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was obliged to keep up the ball of conversation as best she could.

After dinner Captain Tempest arrived, and the three gentlemen were closeted together till late into the night discussing what was to be done. They were agreed that the case against Vera was very strong, and that her disappearance only added to the evidence against her ; they also agreed that Mark was the real culprit, but at present there was not sufficient evidence to make out a case against him.

On the subject of the diamonds they all took different views. Captain Tempest believed Mark had them, the Archdeacon thought Freeman had them and that Mark was only a tool in his hands, while the lawyer didn't believe either of them had or ever had had the jewels, but declined to say what he thought had become of them ; all he would say was he was as certain of Vera's innocence as of his own.

They also differed about Vera. Captain Tempest was for going after her and fetching her home ; the Archdeacon for finding out if he were right in his conjectures about her hiding-place ; whilst the lawyer strongly recommended that she should be left alone, and, for the present, no inquiries made. They knew she was safe, and the less they knew beyond that the better, he argued ; when they had sufficient evidence against Mark Brown and Freeman to convict them, then would be the time for Vera to return.

"We want to find this man Freeman and the diamonds ; not Vera ; she is safe enough or I am mistaken," was the lawyer's ultimatum. And the Archdeacon and his brother finally agreed to act upon it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MRS. CANTER RISES TO THE OCCASION.

"SING a song of sixpence !"

Mary Jane Canter was doing so on the morning after Vera's disappearance ; Mrs. Canter was in her garden engaged in the same manner as the maid in Mary Jane's song, while an uncertain number, probably less than the traditionary four-and-twenty, of blackbirds were serenading her from the neighbouring bushes instead of baking in a pie like their illustrious ancestors. Mrs. Canter's own fate was also happier than the ancient maid's, for no blackbird snapped off her nose. On the contrary ; to pass from poetry to prose, from the real to the metaphorical in one stroke, she very nearly snapped off the postman's nose for presuming to make love to her.

He brought her a letter, and in stretching out one mighty arm to receive it, she trod on one of Mary Jane's "survivals ;" a poor little

pansy whose gentle, heart-shaped blossom was crushed beyond all hope of recovery under the heavy tread of Mrs. Canter, who was as careless of the single life as nature herself. Judging from the number of blossoms which survived this treatment, Mary Jane's flowers belonged to the same class as the wild camomile, which, "the more you tread on it the faster it grows," for the child's treasures seemed to flourish in spite of her mother; like some people they took a good deal of snubbing.

So did the postman.

He had on several former occasions received many hints as broad as Mrs. Canter's shoulders that his attentions were unwelcome, but still he persevered, like Bruce's spider. No sooner did the object of his admiration sweep away the web with which he hoped to catch her, than he spun another, as unavailing for his purpose as the web of even a *Mygale* or an *Olios* would have been.

"A lovely morning, Mrs. Canter," said the postman, with an admiring glance at the fine proportions of Mrs. Canter's figure as, with arms akimbo on her large hips, she rested a moment from her work.

"Ah!" she replied laconically, stooping down to pick up a wet sheet from her basket.

"When a lovely morning entices a lovely woman out of doors at this early hour," began the postman——

"There is sure to be some fool with nothing better to do than to gape at her. It seems to me it is of no consequence what time folks get their letters in this part of the world so long as you can gaze your fill on whatever it pleases you to look at," interrupted Mrs. Canter.

"I brought your letter straight from the office," remonstrated the postman reproachfully.

"Umph!" snorted Mrs. Canter, pegging away at the dripping sheet, with her letter between her teeth, to prevent further conversation.

"Mrs. Canter, do you ever feel lonely?" asked the irrepressible Mr. Lane.

"Law, bless the man! feel lonely, with six children and all these clothes round me from Monday till Saturday?—I should think not, indeed," exclaimed Mrs. Canter, dropping the letter into her apron to enable her to protest against such sentimentality.

"I do, and it is a very unpleasant feeling is loneliness, Mrs. Canter," said the postman.

"I wish I had had the bringing up of you; I warrant I would have made you acquainted with a still more unpleasant feeling," said Mrs. Canter sharply.

"I wish you had; but it is not too late; I am an orphan; I wish you'd bring me up now. I would turn the mangle for you and fetch and carry the linen as well as the letters, and I would be a good husband to you and a kind father to your children."

"And more trouble to me than all the children put together. No,

thank you, Mr. Lane; as I have told you before, a widow I am and a widow I mean to be till it pleases the Almighty to make me an angel," said Mrs. Canter, whose ideas on the relations of angels to men were somewhat crude.

"He has done that already," gallantly returned the postman.

"All the more reason I should remain as I am, then; for the angels neither marry nor are given in marriage. Good morning, Mr. Lane," and Mrs. Canter picked up her linen-basket and walked off into her house to read her letter.

It was from Reuben, and gave so strange an account of the burglary at the Rectory, of Vera's disappearance and the report that Mark had summoned her for shooting him, that, coupled with the mysterious telegram she had had from the Archdeacon the day before, Mrs. Canter could, as she said, make neither head nor tail of it, and at once decided to go to Woodford that very morning and find out for herself how much of this strange story was true. Now, although the sum of matter in Mrs. Canter's composition was a constant quantity, the sum of energy fluctuated; but no one who had the privilege of her acquaintance could doubt the truth of the doctrine of the "conservation of energy." A stock of energy, vast in proportion to the mass of matter which composed her large body, was stored up within her ready at a moment's notice to be transformed into energy of motion. That moment had now come. Till she read her letter, her energy had been in abeyance, or, to speak scientifically, it was energy of position now transformed into energy of motion; and in less than an hour from the time Mrs. Canter read her letter she and the six children had breakfasted, her plans were made, her weeds assumed, the baby and the idiot-boy dressed in their best, their clothes packed, and they and their mother on the way to Woodford, Mary Jane being left to take care of her three brothers under the supervision of a neighbour. Maternal love induced Mrs. Canter to take her baby; she could not bear to be separated from it; a strong sense of duty compelled her to take her idiot-boy; she dared not leave him at home. So, with a child on each knee, she travelled to Woodford, endeavouring the while to construct a continuous narrative out of the fragments of gossip which had reached her. But it baffled her; it was like trying to put together a child's puzzle, of which some of the pieces are missing; it was impossible to make even an imperfect picture out of the fragments she possessed, which would not fit into each other.

On reaching Woodford she went straight to the forge, the children toddling by her side, holding on to her skirts while she carried their luggage in the shape of sundry bundles.

The blacksmith was engaged in shoeing a horse, but he looked up in surprise as Mrs. Canter's portly figure darkened the doorway. The flaming furnace struck the children differently: the idiot-boy was frightened and clinging to his mother, hid his face in her dress and

set up a howl, while the baby was delighted and rushed towards the fire clapping his little hands with delight.

Reuben left his horse and caught the boy in his arms, tossing him up in the air till he almost touched the low roof; then, after expressing his pleasure at seeing his sister, he left his work to one of his men, rolled down his sleeves, put on his coat, and seating the baby on one of his shoulders, took up Mrs. Canter's bundles and led the way to his cottage. On their way up the hill he told Mrs. Canter all he knew about the robbery, laying great stress on Mark's meetings with Freeman, and maintaining his opinion that the latter was the real culprit, Mark only his tool; but beyond the three facts that there had been a jewel robbery at the Rectory, that Mark Brown had been wounded, and that Vera had disappeared, Reuben knew very little. That little they discussed as they dined, and then Mrs. Canter declared she could not rest till she had been up to the Rectory to learn what had become of Vera. So after a hurried toilette, which consisted in soaping her face till it shone like polished mahogany, plastering her dark hair smoothly over her temples and ears, and reassuming her widow's bonnet and veil, she set out, leaving the children to the care of a neighbour.

"Mind your stops, Norah," said Reuben as Mrs. Canter, carrying a clean unfolded pocket-handkerchief in her hand, left the garden.

"I'll try to with the master, but if Mrs. Jamieson-Tempest comes in my way she won't think much of my punctuation I am afraid," replied Mrs. Canter.

She went to the back door of the Rectory, not so much from any sense of the fitness of things as because she hoped to hear the kitchen version of the story before she met the Archdeacon. She was not disappointed in this hope, for the servants were only too glad to tell all they knew to so distinguished a person. But the side of the story which most impressed and exercised their minds was the fact that Mary had seen a ghost in the shape of a Dominican nun, and accordingly this part of the story was told first.

Mrs. Canter, however, had no faith in ghosts; they had no place in her philosophy. She belonged to that materialistic school which maintains that there is no room for ghosts in a world made of ether and atoms. Her disbelief in ghosts, however, was based on moral rather than on scientific principles; the idea was contrary to her ideas of propriety.

"Ghosts, indeed!" she exclaimed. "Why, even if it were possible for the bodies of the dead to rise out of their coffins and come back to the earth to worry the living, they could not do it, for their shrouds would be gone to dust if their bodies weren't, so it would not be decent. Ghosts, indeed! I should just like to catch Canter's ghost pottering about after me. I'd soon let him know his place. Don't talk to me of ghosts. What Mary saw was one of the nuns from the convent, to be sure."

Now, sad to say, Mrs. Canter used these words for the purpose for which, according to the cynic, words were given us—namely, to conceal our real thoughts, for she did not for one moment believe Mary's ghost was a nun from the convent. She had her own theory on the subject, but she had no intention of expressing her views even to the Archdeacon.

"But I did not come all the way from Marling to listen to a ghost story, or a fairy tale either. I want to hear all you know about Miss Vera and the robbery. Where was she when it happened?" said Mrs. Canter, seeing the cold water she had thrown on the ghost had cooled the servants' tongues.

This appeal drew forth a graphic description of the scene when Vera's screams roused the house on the night of the robbery; but Mrs. Canter soon interrupted the eloquence of the butler, who was spokesman.

"Why, I see it all. Mark was stealing the jewels, and Miss Vera walked into the room in her sleep. He fired at her and shot himself, and served him right too. That's what happened, as sure as my name is Norah Canter. Miss Vera has walked in her sleep from a child. I must go and see Mr. Tempest directly; he does not know it."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed the ex-Fuchsia-bells, Holmes and the butler, elliptically, vulgarly and unanimously.

The Archdeacon was in his study; his Lemprière was put away on a shelf; he was in no mood for classical allusions; his Peerage slept in a drawer; noble connections and aristocratic relations seemed incongruous with the trouble which had befallen him; his Bible was hidden under a mass of papers and law books, for even his religion afforded him but little comfort; he had scarcely slept during the night; he was suffering from indigestion caused by sorrow; and he looked so worn and aged that Mrs. Canter's kind heart was touched. Pity got the better of her anger, and she burst into tears.

Most women are emotional; Mrs. Canter was not; therefore this burst of emotion surprised the Archdeacon as much as it surprised herself; but while it rather pleased him, it annoyed her. She was as shy of showing her real tenderness as most men are of showing their religious feelings. So, drying her eyes on the folded handkerchief, she gave herself an indignant shake as a protest against her weakness, and, mentally calling herself a fool for her pains, took the seat the Archdeacon offered her.

"Why, Norah, I am very glad to see you. It was very kind of you to come to me in my trouble. Thank God I am able to tell you Miss Vera is safe, though I do not know certainly where she is."

"Better not inquire, sir, perhaps; I think I can guess. Bless you, she is safe enough, Mr. Tempest. The mercy is she wasn't killed when the pistol woke her. There is nothing more dangerous than to wake sleep-walkers suddenly when they are walking."

"You think Vera was walking in her sleep, then?"

"Think, sir! I am sure of it. She has done it from a child; for years I tied her into her bed every night."

"Does anyone else know this, Norah?"

"Only Mr. Rex, sir, as far as I know. I told him before he left England, and very glad I am I did too; and if I were you, Mr. Tempest, I should telegraph for Mr. Rex to come over at once. He might be of some use, for they tell me that scamp, Mark, has got a summons out against Miss Vera."

"It is true; and unfortunately the evidence is in his favour; but that is not the worst, Norah. I have to drain the cup even to the dregs it seems. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest believes that Vera has stolen her diamonds, and she intends to prosecute her." And the Archdeacon leant back in his chair as if this confession had utterly exhausted him.

It is difficult to say by what process the feminine mind ever arrives at a logical conclusion. It would be impossible to say by what process Mrs. Canter evoked the conclusion she now arrived at from the premises given her; probably it was arrived at by some law of contraries, since no logical law could have given it.

This was her conclusion, spoken aloud with much emphasis:

"I don't believe the diamonds are stolen at all."

"Nonsense, Norah; the diamonds are gone; the empty case was picked up in the shrubbery; there is no doubt whatever on that point, and unfortunately Vera's sudden flight only encouraged Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in her suspicions. It is a terrible trial; a terrible trial." And the Archdeacon nodded his head slowly and sadly as he reiterated his complaint.

"Ah! sir, so I said, when Canter was taken; troubles are like new clothes; they fidget and worry you and you think you'll never be able to wear them, but it is surprising how quickly you get accustomed to them. No matter how big the trouble, it soon passes; it is all the same fifty years hence; like life, it is soon over."

"'What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns,' eh Norah?" quoted the Archdeacon, with the ghost of a smile.

"Trouble of ants, sir; Lord bless you, ants have no troubles; they have no time for troubles, they are too busy; animals are a deal happier than men and women."

"I am busy too, Norah; I have more work than I know how to get through with; but I have time to feel this trial acutely," said the Archdeacon.

Once more Mrs. Canter had recourse to words to conceal her thoughts.

Her thoughts were:—This will be the death of Mr. Tempest, as sure as I am a living woman.

Her words were, "Don't you fret about it, sir; it will all come

right, you'll see. Just telegraph for Mr. Rex, and let me see Mr. Deedes the next time he comes."

"Indeed I will, Norah ; he'll be here this evening. And by the way, I hope you can manage to stay till next Tuesday, when the case comes before the Bench."

"Tuesday is washing day at Marling, sir, but if it was the judgment day I'd come ; washing or no washing, I will be here if you want me," replied Mrs. Canter as she rose to leave.

The Archdeacon, however, detained her some while longer to tell her of Mark's declaration : that he had seen Reuben and Vera down by the canal at midnight, and that he was trying to get up a case against the blacksmith for being an accomplice.

At last Mrs. Canter left the study, but instead of leaving the house also she went straight to the drawing-room, where as she expected she found Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

Mrs. Canter was not a religious woman. Her temperament did not admit of deep religious feeling, and the circumstances of her life militated against the development of any spark of devotion which might be latent within her. Her creed was simple, and contained but few articles. She believed in God, in heaven for the good and in hell for the wicked, and as for the rest you must trust in Providence. Her creed was also liberal, for the "good" in her opinion, in this sense, embraced by far the greater portion of mankind : fools would be saved, she supposed, because they knew no better ; knaves would not, but then the proportion of knaves to fools was as one in ten. Beyond these elementary articles of faith, she thought creed of very little consequence. She preferred the Established Church herself, because she was accustomed to it, but if others preferred to be either Catholics or Dissenters, she had nothing to say against them.

"It is of no more consequence what Church you belong to than what shape your bonnet is, as long as your head is covered," she was wont to declare. "A bonnet is a covering for the head and religion a covering for the heart ; the shape of both is a matter of taste."

Reuben considered his sister one of the unconverted, and frequently "wrestled in prayer" for her, to use his own formula. Mrs. Canter would have smiled a superior smile had she been aware of these vigils on her behalf and would have shown no sign of repentance, but would have fallen back on her favourite theological axiom, "trust in Providence ;" though it is doubtful if this phrase conveyed more real meaning to her mind than "that blessed word Mesopotamia" did to the historical old woman.

Though liberal in her wide application of her scheme of salvation, her liberality was somewhat cynical, for she was occasionally heard to remark "So-and-so was not clever enough to be lost, for the devil was so clever he did not care to have any stupid people in his kingdom." Nevertheless she was very decided in her condemnation of certain persons. For instance, she had not a shadow of a

doubt as to the goal of either Mark Brown or Mrs. Ryot-Tempest ; and as she made her way to the drawing-room, she decided to warn that lady of the fate that awaited her if she persisted in her present course.

"If it were not for Miss Vera, I would not trouble my head about her ; she might go her own way as fast as she liked, for I am sure Heaven will be a much pleasanter place without her, and there is not the slightest doubt she has booked for the other place," said Mrs. Canter to herself, as she threw open the drawing-room door and without any further ceremony entered the room and went straight to her point.

"Good morning, Mrs. Tempest. I daresay you are more surprised than pleased to see me, but I have two or three things to say to you, so I walked in after I left the master. And first of all let me tell you, madam, you are killing him ; there is death in his face ; it is not a twelvemonth since you buried your first husband ; you'll have to bury your second before the year is out if you don't take care," began Mrs. Canter, forgetting her stops entirely.

"Have the kindness to leave this room directly, Mrs. Canter ; what do these servants mean by admitting you?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest with an angry flush.

"They did not admit me, ma'am ; I admitted myself ; and the next thing I have to say is, I am prepared to swear before the magistrates that Miss Vera has walked in her sleep from a child," persisted Mrs. Canter with her hands folded in front of her, holding the still unfolded handkerchief between them.

"That will not prove that she was doing so on the night of the robbery. Besides, I have no doubt you would swear black is white for her sake," coolly remarked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"No, ma'am, I would not ; I would not swear you ever spoke the truth in your life to save my own soul," replied Mrs. Canter glibly.

"Once more, will you have the kindness to leave me ? This insolence is unbearable," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, rising and ringing the bell violently.

"I am going directly, ma'am, when I have warned you that if you persist in accusing Miss Vera of stealing those diamonds, which, for my part, I don't believe are stolen at all, you'll kill the master, and then, whether you die in your bed or not there is no doubt where you will go to. And if you think Captain Raleigh will believe a word against Miss Vera, you are very much mistaken ; for he told me his opinion of her and of you too before he left England. Good afternoon, ma'am." And Mrs. Canter retreated from the battle-field with a proud sense of victory glowing in her breast, just as the butler answered the bell.

"Never admit that insolent woman again, Baines, on any pretext whatever," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest angrily to the astonished butler, who had heard the latter part of Mrs. Canter's remarks.

But in spite of this prohibition Mrs. Canter was admitted again that same day, and spent an hour in the study that evening with the Archdeacon, Captain Tempest and Mr. Deedes the solicitor, returning to Reuben very much pleased with herself because her advice had been taken and Rex was telegraphed for. This would not have been practicable had he been in Manitoba, but he had taken a house in Toronto for the winter as being more comfortable for Janet, and he was still in Toronto when the telegram reached him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

VERA'S FLIGHT.

VERA felt utterly crushed when her step-mother left her after telling her that she would shortly be arrested in her father's absence on a false charge of shooting Mark Brown. She threw herself on her mother's sofa in an agony of grief. The loneliness of her position appalled her, and it was perhaps natural that, feeling as she did, so entirely at the mercy of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, she should exaggerate this loneliness, for her father would be back in a few hours and the servants were all on her side. The shame and disgrace of being taken into custody even on a false charge seemed insupportable, and for a few minutes Vera scarcely knew what wild thoughts took possession of her ; for she was young and the young find trouble hard to bear, in spite of the capacity for suffering each human soul possesses.

We gaze up into the galaxy on a star-lit night ; we know that each of those million stars crowded so closely together is a sun with a system like our own sun. We gaze through a telescope, and more and more stars reveal themselves, till the human mind fails to grasp the infinitudes of space. All we can say is, Nature is infinitely great.

We place a drop of water under a microscope, and we find it crowded with living creatures. We employ a more powerful instrument, and these infusoria are multiplied, and we can only wonder and exclaim, Nature also is infinitely small.

We cannot gauge her, for she is infinite.

Infinite also is human suffering—past, present and future. The star-depths themselves are limited in comparison with that. We may weigh the stars and measure the suns, and calculate their distance from us to a fraction ; but we cannot even approximately measure the amount of human suffering this earth of ours has seen, sees, and will see, for that too is infinite.

Infinite also is the capacity for suffering in one single human soul, one little drop in the ocean of humanity. We may rather count the animalculæ in one drop of water, measure its capacity for containing life, than gauge the capacity for suffering in one human soul. It also is infinite, for the soul is eternal.

And as Vera lay crushed with the blow which struck her to the earth, she dimly realised how great were the powers of suffering which she possessed ; and she was frightened, for she did not know, or, if she knew she did not remember, that in equal ratio with the power of suffering goes the power of enjoyment. Suddenly she remembered the letter from Father Ambrose which she had received that morning, and as quickly she resolved what to do. She had still one true friend who would protect her within or nearly within reach ; she would go to Avranches to him. She had made the journey so often with her parents that she was not in the least nervous at the thought of going alone without an escort.

She rose and went to her bedroom to make the necessary preparations, resolved to start before Mark returned ; but she found the door locked, and she now realised that her step-mother was in earnest, and meant to do her utmost to prevent her escape. Vera, however, was not a girl to be conquered easily ; her spirit was roused ; the love of adventure latent in her awoke ; her will was determined ; she meant to escape ; the want of a hat and cloak would not prevent her.

Fortunately she kept her money in her sitting-room, and as she counted out what she thought she would need for the journey, she remembered the Dominican habit and cloak of her Aunt Vera were in the oak chest. Quick as thought she opened it, and found the whole costume just as she had put it away that happy day, which seemed so long ago, when she had dressed up in it and taken her father in. This was the very thing ; it would disguise her completely, if she put on a pair of spectacles. It was an out-door costume, and was warm. So, locking the door, she took off her dress and put on the white serge habit and scapular, the leathern girdle and rosary attached to it. Then she took off her high-heeled shoes and, with a little grimace at their ugliness, drew on the orthodox white stockings and low leather shoes. Then she covered her pretty golden hair with the white linen cap, which covered her ears, and put the guimpe under her chin and the black veil over the cap. And then she looked in the glass and saw she made a very lovely nun. But the green spectacles she had worn before completed the disguise so entirely that no one who knew her would have recognised her. And, finally, throwing on the black cloak which the nuns wear in chapel in winter, or whenever they go outside their convent walls, Vera unlocked the door and ran swiftly and noiselessly downstairs. Her heart was beating wildly, but she reached the garden safely, meeting only Mary, who as we know did not recognise her, on the way. Once outside the house, she felt half the danger was over, for the chances of recognition were very small, and in England, at any rate, the fact of one nun travelling by herself would occasion no remark.

On her way to the station, to which she was hurrying to catch the up-train to London, she had a great alarm, for whom should she meet but Mark Brown and two policemen, evidently on their way up

to the Rectory. Vera's heart stood still as she walked quickly past them, keeping the custody of her eyes in true religious fashion, though, indeed, her green spectacles rendered this superfluous.

"Well, I don't know that I ever saw one of the nuns out alone before all the years I have been in Woodford," remarked one of the policemen as he passed Vera.

"I count she has been up to see our young lady," said Mark loud enough for Vera to hear.

She quickened her pace after this encounter, and reached the station a quarter of an hour before the up-train was due.

"Time," says Rosalind, "travels in divers paces with divers persons." She might have added: "at divers seasons."

"The moving image of eternity" seemed to Vera to stand stock-still during that quarter of an hour; or, if he travelled at all, to travel backwards; each second seemed to her a minute, each minute an hour; each minute she feared to see the police return to arrest her, though she knew if the train were punctual she would be on her way to London before they reached the Rectory.

At last the train came in only a minute or two late, and Vera jumped into a first-class carriage, ignorant or forgetful of the fact that holy poverty usually compels nuns to travel third-class. Her original intention had been to go down to Southampton that same evening and cross over to St. Malo that night; but on inquiring in London she found that the summer service had not yet begun and the boats only ran three times a week, so there was no boat that night. This information disconcerted Vera at first, for she was very anxious to avoid going to an hotel alone, and equally anxious to get to Father Ambrose as quickly as possible; but after a little reflection she decided to change her route and travel by Dover and Calais instead of viâ Southampton, catching the mail-boat that evening at Dover.

Before leaving London she telegraphed to her father that she was safe, for her conscience began to reproach her on his account now that all danger of being arrested was over. At Dover she removed her glasses, thinking it was no longer necessary to disguise herself any more than her nun's dress disguised her; and to her relief she found two French nuns, of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul, on board the steamer, who, privately wondering who this lovely young Dominican could possibly be, travelling alone; and suspecting there was something wrong about her, for she was very reticent about herself; took her under their protection. They were going to Paris, and they persuaded Vera to travel with them instead of going by Rouen and Caen, which would take quite as long. They promised to see her into the train for Avranches, and as this would give her an opportunity of getting a meal in Paris under the nuns' wings before starting, Vera gladly accepted their offer.

It soon became clear they intended to look sharply after their new

young friend ; and when they landed at Calais, Vera, to her inward amusement, was sandwiched firmly in between the two good sisters, who seemed mightily afraid every man they passed would seize the young Dominican and carry her bodily off before their eyes. Little did they know how very near one man was to doing so. Indeed, had he known what they shrewdly suspected, that Vera was no nun at all, that man, who was none other than Captain Raleigh on his way home from India, would most certainly have done so.

He met them at the railway station, where the Marseilles train had just deposited him and his cabin luggage ; he recognised Vera, whose image was scarcely absent from his mind, in an instant, though her downcast lids hid her eyes ; but the thing seemed so impossible that he refused at first to believe. They got her safely to the railway station, but there, just as they were entering it, they had, though they did not know it, a very narrow escape : had Vera happened to raise her eyes, whose custody she was keeping so closely ; and had she seen the pale handsome face of the English officer who looked so hard at her as the nuns hurried her past him ; their self-imposed task of protecting their new acquaintance would have been at an end.

As the time of Vera's minority drew to a close Captain Raleigh grew more and more restless, till at last he could stand it no longer ; and, having obtained leave of absence, he left India three weeks earlier than was necessary to enable him to reach England in time for her twenty-first birthday.

By one of those strange coincidences which occur so often in real life as well as in fiction, he reached Calais from Brindisi just as Vera was leaving it for Paris. One glance sufficed for him to recognise Vera, as she entered the railway station between the two nuns, just as he, with a servant behind him, was leaving it ; but that one glance, though it pierced his heart like a sword, for it told him all his hope of earthly happiness was at an end, was yet not sufficient for him to act upon. He must see her again and convince himself against himself it was really she. So, hoping against all hope, he turned back and passed the three nuns once more, looking as closely as good manners would allow at the central figure. Alas ! there was not a vestige of doubt.

It was she ; though her veined lids and long drooping lashes hid her lovely eyes.

Yes, there was no doubt. It was Vera ; his Vera ; his bride elect, whom he had come to England to claim ; she who in three weeks time was to be his wife, if there was any truth in woman at all. What did it mean ? His Vera a religieuse !

He left her nine months ago a Protestant, and for aught he had heard to the contrary she was still a Protestant. Instead of which he sees her in the habit of a Dominican novice ; for that she was a professed nun he knew to be impossible ; the noviciate, he was aware,

lasted several years ; in fact it was quick work to become a novice in so short a time ; but he supposed the fact that Vera had been baptised a Catholic in her infancy had been taken into consideration.

But why had she not written and told him that she had chosen the higher life. She was bound to him in honour, and had she written and told him of her vocation to the religious life he was too devout a Catholic to have put any stumbling block in her way, bitter as the trial to renounce her would have been to him even then. It was ten times more bitter to come home from India hoping in a few weeks to claim her as his bride, and find her in a convent already "clothed," and his first feeling was one of anger ; anger, not because she had embraced the highest life, but because she had not told him of her intention.

He had intended going straight on to Dover that night, but after watching the train containing Vera (whom the nuns quickly hustled into a carriage) leave the station, he changed his plan and drove to an hotel, where he passed the rest of the night in bemoaning his loss and deciding what course to pursue.

It was a most bitter trial to him, for he firmly believed Vera was as dead to him as if she were in her grave ; had he met her coffin he could not have felt more keenly that he had lost her. The brief glimpse he had caught of her told him she had suffered ; in fact, he suspected she was still suffering, and he would be the last man on earth to add to her suffering by renewing his suit, even if it were possible for him to get at her.

He had prayed constantly for her conversion : truly his prayers had been more than granted.

And then the blow had fallen so suddenly. A few hours ago and he counted himself the happiest man on earth ; now he thought himself the most miserable. In one moment all the light had gone out of his life. Henceforth he must walk, sadly and slowly, in loneliness to the grave, with the fair image of that lovely young face, which never looked more lovely than when shrouded in her nun's veil and hood, burnt in on his brain.

His grief was very great, but it was a sacred sorrow ; not one to be peered into curiously or analysed psychologically. There are holy places in the human soul into which we may not enter ; shrines paved with the cold stones of disappointment ; built of secret sufferings, cemented together with self-control ; ceiled with hopes unfulfilled ; roofed with the memory of past joys ; decorated with the jewels of penance ; lighted with the dim, and too often flickering, light of religion ; dedicated to Him Who alone has the right to enter.

There was such a shrine in the soul of Arthur Raleigh ; but hush ! it is a sacred place ; we may not enter. Suffice it to say, he felt his sorrow like a man ; he also bore it like a man ; and therefore it is

perhaps unnecessary to add that everything went wrong with him the next morning. He could get no coffee fit to drink, no food fit to eat; his servant, an old and valued one, suddenly forgot how to brush his master's clothes and how to pack his portmanteau; the train service he discovered was the worst in the world, and the waiters the stupidest in existence, because they allowed the first train for Brindisi to leave without telling him what time it started.

In vain for his servant and the waiters to suggest they understood he was on his way to Dover; they understood nothing about it; he was on his way back to India; he supposed he could change his plans without consulting them; perhaps they would find out when the next train for Brindisi left, and, if possible, get him something he could eat before starting; he did not care what he had; all he asked, and that with the air of a martyr, was it should be decently cooked; his wants were small and simple. And then he lighted his pipe, and endeavoured to draw what comfort he could from that as he meditated on his own "sweet reasonableness."

The upshot of his night's wakefulness had been to make him resolve to return to India at once by the very next boat, instead of going to England to see his mother; she did not know he was in Europe—she should not know it; he would go back to his regiment and endeavour to crush out his disappointment with work. Accordingly he left Calais that afternoon for Brindisi.

Meanwhile Vera reached Avranches safely at six o'clock that same evening, having left the good nuns at Paris very much exercised about her. The nearer she got to Avranches the more anxious she became about her reception by Father Ambrose. What would he say to her for running away from her home?

Even when he knew why she had done so, would he approve of her conduct?

Would her assumption of the nun's habit scandalise him?

Would he take her in?

Or, would he insist upon her returning to her father at once?

This last seemed the most probable course he would suggest, but it was one Vera had resolved no power on earth should induce her to adopt; so she determined to tell Father Ambrose her story in the confessional, thinking that by so doing she would be able to force him to keep her secret "nolens volens." Accordingly, when she reached Avranches, instead of going to his house, she went into the church which adjoined it, and rang the sacristy bell, as she had seen her mother do when she wanted to go to confession.

Vera was not a nervous person, but she felt decidedly nervous as she stood waiting for the sacristy door to be opened. She had no doubt of Father Ambrose's willingness to help her; he was too old and too tried a friend for her to doubt that; but she was afraid he would disapprove of her conduct, both in leaving her home and in assuming a dress she had no right to wear; so she resolved he should

not see her in it till he knew why she had been compelled to put it on.

"I want Father Ambrose, please," she said in French to the boy who opened the door.

And then, before Father Ambrose appeared, she pushed aside the curtain of the confessional and, entering, knelt down. The next minute she heard Father Ambrose come out of the sacristy, and, having put on his surplice, take his seat in the confessional and say something to her in Latin, which she did not understand.

Vera, trembling like an aspen, put her beautiful face close to the grating and whispered :

"Father Ambrose, don't you know me? I am not a nun; I am Vera Tempest."

(To be continued.)



UNDER THE MOON.

UNDER the moon I see them go,
From my casement that looks o'er the city dim,
Hurrying, loitering, to and fro,
The faces fair and the faces grim :
The girl who into her carriage springs,
The lover who speeds her, blithe and gay,
The drunkard who to the railing clings,
The haggard figure that slinks away
Under the moon, under the moon—
That, calm and serene on her throne above,
Tells of Heaven and peace and love.

Under the moon I see them go—
Hopeful and hopeless, the rich, the poor,
Hurrying, loitering, to and fro,
The old and weary, the young and pure.
"Oh, hard are God's ways to be understood!"
I said to myself as I gazed adown
On flower-crowned earth, that He once called "good"—
On church and dwelling of man-made town!
Under the moon, under the moon—
That, pure and serene on her throne above,
Tells for ever that "God is Love."

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

SCIENCE AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

BY MISS BETHAM-EDWARDS.

ATTENTION was lately drawn in the pages of the *Argosy* to the scientific ardour displayed, to use the words of our late Astronomer Royal, "in the hottest times of the Revolution." Let us adduce further instances.

Whilst the National Assembly was giving France a Constitution ; whilst the great Carnot under the Convention was organising and directing sixteen armies ; time, money and energy were yet found for purely scientific enterprise.

We are all of us by this time tolerably familiar with the Eucalyptus Globulus ; the marvellous Australian gum-tree, so swift of growth, so rich in health-giving properties, that within the last thirty years has made the tour of Europe. It is to the French Revolution that we are indebted for this tree.

In 1791 the National Assembly decreed, in the name of the King, a relief expedition in search of La Pérouse. The intrepid navigator had set out four years before on a voyage of scientific discovery, but since 1788 nothing had been heard of him. How lively the interest felt in his fate may be gathered from the following official dispatch :

"February 9, 1791. The National Assembly decrees that the King be entreated to direct that one or more vessels be equipped, and several learned and experienced persons, naturalists and draughtsmen, be embarked therein, and the commander charged with a double mission—to search after M. de la Pérouse, and at the same time to take every measure to render this expedition useful to navigation, geography, commerce, science and the arts."

This decision took place, if not "in the hottest times of the Revolution," at least in a critical hour. A few weeks later Mirabeau was dead, the coalition was formed, the King had been brought back a prisoner from Varennes. On the eve of civil war and an invasion of the armed forces of Europe, the Assembly could further decree : "That the charts and accounts already sent by M. de la Pérouse shall be printed and engraved at the expense of the nation ; further, that he shall remain on the list of naval commissioned officers until the return of the ships sent in search of him, and that his pay shall continue to be made to his wife."

The publication ordered by the National Assembly was immediately translated into English, accompanied by the plates and maps of the French edition. A curious and interesting work it is, and may still be picked up on the bookstalls.

The discovery of the Eucalyptus is thus related by Labillardière,

one of the botanists despatched with the *Recherche* and the *Espérance* the two vessels forming the relief expedition.

"12th of May, 1792 (the expedition had reached Van Diemen's Land), I had not hitherto been able to procure the flower of a new kind of tree, the fruit of which resembles a coat-button. This tree, one of the loftiest in nature, only blossoms at the top, and we had to cut one down in order to obtain the flower. It belongs to the myrtle tribe; and the bark, leaves and fruit are very aromatic."

It is worth while to note the date of this entry.

In 1792 appeared the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto, threatening Paris with fire and sword unless French liberties were surrendered. The country was invaded by the upholders of the *ancien régime*—Danton's favourite watchword had gone forth, "*De l'audace, encore de l'audace et toujours de l'audace*"—the Assembly had proclaimed "*La patrie en danger*;" thousands of volunteers had enrolled themselves in the army of the Republic, and soon the victories of Valmy and Jemappes struck terror into the hearts of the invaders.

Thus, as Sir George Airy expresses it, in the hottest time of the revolution, scientific inquiry was pursued with an ardour unequalled elsewhere in periods of peace.

It was not, however, till within our own day that the valuable properties of the Eucalyptus have obtained general recognition. As a rapidly-growing febrifugal tree, it is of the first importance in swampy and miasmatic regions; whilst innumerable economical and medicinal preparations have been made from its bark and leaves. Since 1860, rare forests of Eucalyptus have clothed formerly treeless tracts in Algeria, Spain and elsewhere, rendering them healthful and productive.

Such instances of scientific ardour by no means give an adequate idea of what the National Assembly and the Convention really accomplished. Already the former had decreed the "*Liberté de Travail*," in other words, had broken up those guilds and corporations of artisans, the "*maîtrises et jurandes*," so hampering to the individual and so prejudicial to the interests of trade generally.

The Convention, not content with creating technical schools, introduced a certain amount of technical training into its scheme of primary instruction. The pupils of elementary schools were to be taught, in addition to arithmetic, notions of geometry, land surveying and kindred subjects. Up to this time, be it remembered, the education of the people in France had been a dead letter. What schools existed in rural places were in the hands of the priests, who contented themselves with teaching their scholars to spell a Credo or Paternoster and recite the catechism; writing was seldom attempted, much less the teaching of the national language. The Convention, in its educational programme, laid especial stress on the teaching of French in primary schools; and, when we consider the condition of the country at the time, we shall understand the motive.

For what was France until the fall of the monarchy and the division of the country into departments? A heterogeneous mass of States, small and large, as the case might be, having hardly more cohesion than the petty German principalities of late years incorporated into the German Empire. It is difficult for English readers to imagine how very slowly the vast map of France was put together, like a child's puzzle, piece by piece, and how very late in French history the map was made complete. As portion after portion was added to the Crown, successive governments had attempted a process of assimilation but with feeble success. There still remained State within State, each having usages that had grown into law; some even retaining their own language. Travellers in France are reminded to this day of these arbitrary divisions. Country folks still speak of a place as being "en Forez," or "Dans le Morvan," instead of naming the respective departments of the Rhône and the Nièvre. Before the departmental division, with its system of responsible magistrates, the seigneurs of Le Forez were in the fact, if not in the letter, the rulers of the people, whilst the Morvan was a country made up of village communes, having their own customs, almost regarded as laws. The Lyonnais was annexed to the French Crown in the fourteenth century, but not till 1659 did the Morvan pass from the hands of its Italian Dukes into those of the Grand Monarque. Again, Brittany may be said to have retained its nationality till long after the Vendean war, and we may yet find there peasants unable to speak French. We of course expect nothing but sophisms from Burke concerning "that putrid carcase, that mother of all evil—the French Revolution," and none is more striking than his denunciation of the departmental system; whereas, instead of such a division being hurtful to the State and to the districts thus apportioned, it was of the first importance in consolidating the nation and in simplifying the process of government. The Revolution gave France a map and geography.

When the National Assembly divided the country into departments, and when the Convention decreed the teaching of French in elementary schools, France became a nation indeed.

Take again the unification of weights and measures, also the work of the Convention. Both systems are very ingenious and elaborate, but are too well known to need description. What is not so well known is the terrible confusion that reigned throughout France before such standards were decreed. Let us hear "that wise and honest traveller," as our first English critic calls Arthur Young, on these points. The practical Suffolk farmer has hardly words with which to express his disgust at the state of things found in France. In his chapter on Produce and Prices occur the passages: "In France the infinite perplexity of the measures exceed all comprehension. They differ not only in every province, but in every district and almost in every town; and the tormenting variations are found

equally in the denominations and contents of the measures of land and corn. The *arpent* de Paris and the *arpent* de France are both legal and common measures ; notwithstanding which, they are of very different contents. The denominations of bushel and acre pervade all England, and the mere denomination leads everywhere towards proportioning the contents to the common standards, but in France they have no common denominations : if you travel seventy miles from Paris, you hear no more of the *septier* or *arpent*, you find the *mine* even within thirty miles of the capital ; a little further, you will be bewildered with *franchars* of corn and *mancos* of land."

One of the most curious instances of revolution run wild is the project laid before the Convention as to the "necessity of revolutionizing the language." Barnave, the Protestant orator, and afterwards defender of royalty, complained that, being in a country where a certain "ramage" or chatter was necessary in order to be received into good society, he wished to see the said conventionalities of speech disappear with other baubles of a corrupt society. The proposition created no little sensation, and among those who took part in the discussion was the Abbé Grégoire.

The Abbé expressed his astonishment that provinces suppressed by decree were still permitted to retain their unconstitutional patois, and that the law, in effacing geographical demarcations, had left dialects alone. Of what good to efface the names Gascony and Normandy from the map, whilst the idiom of the inhabitants revealed the fact by a seditious accent ?

"It is true," said the orator, "that such uniformity is difficult to obtain, but let us not calumniate our fellow citizens by suggesting that they will reject any notion useful to the patrie, with the sacrifice of a feudal or hereditary habit, the sacrifice of an acute accent affixed to the mute e. Ah ! let us not injure them by a suspicion. They have combated federation in politics ; with the same energy they will combat federation in syntax and spelling."

And effectively in the 10th prairial, year II. of the Republic, the *e* was denounced by a public decree. It was decided to form a committee for the purpose of compiling a new grammar and dictionary of the French language, such as would give it that character most appropriate to the language of liberty.

This measure was passed just two months before the 9th of Thermidor, that is to say, the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Terror.

Absurd as may appear the propositions of Barnave and the Abbé Grégoire, true it is that to this day an inhabitant of one part of France may be hardly able to understand a fellow-countryman.

The great Educational Act of 1886 is changing this state of things, and pure French is now finding its way into remote corners of Brittany and the Cévennes.

A FREE-WILL OFFERING.

BY ELLA EDERSHEIM.

I.

MAJOR BROWN lay stretched out in the long basket-chair in the smoking-room of Sea View Villa. A small fox-terrier slept, curled up into a firm ball, on the rug. The Major's feet were placed at exactly the correct angle for securing the proper amount of warmth from the fire. An open novel lay across his knee, and the fragrance of most excellent tobacco rose from his pipe. Yet in spite of these comfortable surroundings his face was sombre and his brow heavy, and every now and then he sighed a little, and made an uneasy movement.

It was exactly six weeks since Major Brown had touched his native shores after an eight years' sojourn in India. He had arrived in excellent spirits. He felt that he fully deserved his furlough. Then it was delightful to be in Old England again; he would be able to improve his health, impaired by hot climates and fever; he would see old friends, visit old haunts, and above all renew that intercourse with Miss Nettie Drayton which had made life so bright to him eight years before.

Sweet Nettie Drayton, the Rector's daughter, whom he had found buried in a forgotten village! Broken visions of that time were passing before him now, and he seemed to see himself once more the gay young fellow who had wooed and won her. They two were together beside the quiet river under the shadow of the great chestnut trees, and he was teaching Nettie how to fish. The lowing of the cattle was in his ears; he felt the scent of the new cut grass and saw the waving of the meadow-sweet on the further bank and the tall reeds that grew at their feet. How young and fair and tender the girl looked in her simple white frock and broad hat! How strong and proud he felt as he watched her and knew that she loved him, and vowed to her that nothing, nor time, nor distance, nor fresh and fairer faces could move him in his love for her. And then came the parting, the bitterness of which had been broken by the assurance that, in a few years at most, they would meet again, and that then there would be no more partings between them, but that their lives would flow on together, quietly and blissfully as the peaceful river at their feet.

Major Brown shifted uneasily in his chair, and the fox-terrier raised his head, yawned, and then relapsed again into slumber.

How was it that impressions faded so quickly, or was it the fault of his own character? It seemed to him now that the first splash of the salt waves against the sides of the ship that bore him away from

home had washed away those quiet country pictures. And then had come the novelty and excitement of the Indian life: the hunting expeditions, the threatened native mutinies, and the years had glided on. Harry Brown had soon won the character for being "good company," and this, though very pleasant, he found expensive to keep up. When the time came, therefore, for his regiment to return to England he had been only too glad to exchange, and this opportunity missed he had, at last, almost ceased to long and look forward to that happy reunion of which Nettie's letters still spoke. Yet it was good to have someone to whom to tell all one's adventures and plans, and who sent one in return long, regular letters by every mail, so saturated with the spirit of the quiet home life that as one read them one almost seemed to breathe the air of England again. Major Brown had not any near relations, had no one except Nettie to fill this place. And she had filled it well and faithfully.

But eight years is a very long time.

Though Nettie recognised him immediately, she saw a very different man, when Major Brown landed at Southampton, from the young fellow who had embarked eight years before. He was much thinner, and looked even gaunt.

His face was tanned a deep brown, and he had brought away one or two scars from a hand to hand encounter with a tiger. He was not by any means handsome, but he was the sort of man a woman feels proud to walk with and acknowledge as her property. But Major Brown, on his part, had experienced a kind of shock when Nettie stepped out of the crowd to greet and claim him. Was that little Nettie? Somehow he had not realised that eight years must have changed the girl he had left behind him. And he had always thought of her in that white frock and shady hat. But it was a chilly November day, and Miss Drayton had very properly muffled herself in warm wraps, and drawn a stylish and becoming veil over the features that she could not but suspect had considerably altered. Their meeting had therefore been uneffusive, and to Major Brown, on whose side it was the quietest, somewhat disappointing.

Nettie had carried him that same day down to Bournemouth, where she and her mother had settled since the decease of her father, the Rector. They occupied a large, well-built villa on the West Cliff, standing in a small, flat garden-plot. The house commanded a wide view over the Bournemouth Bay and into the neighbouring premises; advantages which, however, the latter shared in common with it. Major Brown soon became conscious of lace caps and curious eyes whenever he and Nettie appeared outside, and somehow this irritated him strangely. It was insufferable not to be able to smoke one's pipe alone and in peace on the sunny, sandy walk in front of the house. Gradually driven from this resort he had retreated more and more into the privacy and seclusion of the little smoking-room, only leaving it for hurried visits to the lending library at the pier-head,

where he procured the sole amusement Bournemouth seemed to offer.

Mrs. Drayton found her future son-in-law extremely uninteresting. She could not see what Nettie found in him to prefer to the manifest attentions of Mr. Cross, the senior curate of their parish church. The Major spent his days in reading novels and smoking—a life which no reasonable and responsible human being should permit himself to lead. She had tried to interest him in the Anglo-Israelites, to whose existence she had herself been but lately introduced by a lady-friend. She had lent him tracts and books upon the subject, and had most eloquently explained to him the reasonableness of her belief by a slight historical sketch of the chosen people, tracing them from the time of Moses to their subsequent settlement in the British Isles. The Major had listened, and had seemed, if a little sleepy, to be impressed, until she wound up by triumphantly declaring that there was now proof positive, which she would not trouble him by giving, that he and she might with as much right call themselves Israelites as could the Rothschilds, or the pencil-man who had called the day before. At this point he had yawned outright, and exclaimed roughly that it was all nonsense, that he wasn't a Jew, and didn't mean to be one, and, evidently prejudiced by the remembrance of some youthful folly, that for his part he thought the less one had to do with them the better. Mrs. Drayton never got over this. She said she could not like a man of such coarse feeling, and now openly sang opposition praises of Mr. Cross. Nettie, too, had been shocked, and to the Major's relief the ladies had not since then invited him to accompany them to the meetings on this and similar subjects which they attended in the Town Hall.

Major Brown was startled from his reverie by a hand being passed caressingly over his stubbly, reddish hair. He jumped up almost impatiently, and turning, faced Nettie. She was standing at the back of the basket-chair, and his eyes rested meditatively for some moments on the small, trim figure, the thin, rather lined face, the pale hair, which had lost its sunny gold and lay back smoothly from an unclouded, expressionless forehead. She spoke in a high but sweet voice.

"Harry, dear, don't you think it's time to go and get ready? It is four o'clock, and we are expecting our friends every minute."

The Major stretched himself, yawning. "Are you, my love?" His tone was ludicrously unlike a lover's, and more like that of a man who has been placidly married some twenty years. "Then I suppose I ought to go. But," with an attempt at jocularly to conceal his evident boredom, "what am I to do? Am I to put on dress clothes?"

Miss Drayton laughed. "Silly boy!" The Major winced. "No! But I suppose you will change your coat, won't you? You do smell so horribly of tobacco, and some ladies, you know, object to it."

"Oh, hang it all!" began the Major, but seeing Miss Drayton's grieved look he broke off, and continued again in a resigned voice: "Yes, yes, my dear. I'll do it, of course. Just as you like."

Miss Drayton did not seem to notice the suppressed irritability of his tone. She gave him a grateful glance, and then coming round to him on the hearthrug laid her hand gently on his arm and looked up into his face.

"I don't bother you terribly, do I, Harry?" she asked anxiously. "I could not bear to do that. But you know you have been so long out of ladies' society, and mamma and I have always been used—I mean—" stammering rather helplessly, "we don't like—our friends don't——"

The Major flushed a little, but then laughed, and took the opportunity to move away from Miss Drayton.

"No, no, Nettie, you needn't be afraid," he said, reassuringly; "I won't put you to shame. I'll be on my very best behaviour, and swear that I am the lineal descendant of—Aaron, or whoever else you like." Then stopping at the door and looking back: "And it's to be quite exciting, for you've got some lions coming, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Miss Drayton blandly. "Mr. Cross has promised to look in, and Miss Levison is coming too. She's a *real* Jewess, you know, by birth I mean, though her aunt and cousin are not. Mr. Cross converted her a long time ago. I don't know her well—she's rather difficult to get at. But I believe she's very clever."

"Oh! A clever converted Jewess!" Major Brown interrupted, laughing again, and left the room.

II.

THE drawing-room was very hot and quite full of ladies. The gas was lighted and threw bright lights and deep shadows on the bonneted heads of Mrs. Drayton's guests as they sipped their tea and chatted together of amiable nothings.

Major Brown had retreated to a secure corner near the door, barricaded by a screen and a sofa, and from this point of vantage let his weary eye wander aimlessly over the crowd.

For some time he had been watching Nettie as she flitted about among the guests, supplying their five o'clock wants, and seeing that they were grouped in order suitable for the exchange of that small gossip so dear to the hearts of ladies. Every now and again, he noticed with an amused interest, she would spare a moment from these duties in which to receive the strictly ecclesiastical attentions of her clerical admirer.

There had been music which had ceased, and conversation had recommenced with fresh vigour. The Major had fallen into a brown study, from which he became conscious of waking suddenly with a start as a strange harmony stole through the room, soft, yet piercing the babel of voices.

He glanced up and saw that a small man with a large head and great dark eyes looking out of a wan face, his shoulders so high as to be almost misproportioned, sat at the piano, and beside him there stood a tall young woman. Her face was pale and smooth and singularly beautiful, and looked, in the glare of the gas-light, as though it had been cut out of ivory, its whiteness forcibly contrasting with the dark hair that waved on each side of it and with the straight lines of dark eyebrow. Her eyes were cast down, and as Major Brown looked, wondering that he had not before noticed this strange couple, she put up her hand, and with a most unconventional movement loosened and then removed the little velvet bonnet she wore.

A deep silence had fallen on the room, and a shudder seemed to run through the company at the girl's action. Then she began to sing, and Major Brown forgot to think of anything else, forgot to look about him or to mock at the hushed and faintly troubled audience. She had a low, round voice, which stole on his senses and took possession entire and absolute of them, till she had carried him far away to the land of which she sang. All knowledge of where and what he was forsook him. He became impersonal, and yet he breathed the air of that odorous land, the bright sun was sinking in the west, and now he stood alone with her in the starlight by the rushing Kur, with the red wine in his hand and great passion in his heart, and "O! wenn es doch immer so bliebe!"

She had stopped, and he looked up dreamily. It was not surprising to him that he did not see her. What could she and her voice and her song be but a glimpse from the vision-land of the possible? Two ladies on the sofa before him, however, were discussing the singer as though she were very real.

"Who's that girl?" asked the one.

"Oh, that's Miss Levison. Her father was a converted Jew. In trade and a nobody, you know, but he made a great fortune and this girl's an heiress. They say she's going to marry that dreadful little man, her cousin. He hasn't a penny, but is very clever—and doesn't he play beautifully? That's his mother in the velvet cloak just saying 'good-bye.' They have been trying Bournemouth for her health, but it does not suit her and they are leaving immediately."

"Dear me!" interrupted the first speaker, "how very interesting! But just look at the girl now! How can she put on her bonnet again without a glass! I never saw such manners. Yes—dreadfully Jewish-looking and her style far too professional. But have you heard the wonderful discovery which really quite establishes our claim to being Anglo-Israelites? No? Well, the prophet Jeremiah married an Irish——"

Major Brown felt that duty could require no more of him and silently absconded to the smoking-room. Once safely within its sheltering solitude he threw himself back into the basket-chair, and

lighting his pipe tried to conjure up his vision again through the curling wreaths of smoke.

And the clock ticked and the wind whistled : " O ! wenn es doch immer so bliebe."

III.

ALL around the noise of German tongues, the smell of German cigars, the sound of German eating, drinking and conviviality. Surely it is a nation very much over-estimated ! So, at least, thought Major Brown, pacing wearily up and down the broad terrace of the Homburg Kur-Haus.

During the past monotonous Bournemouth winter the Major's spirits had, in the most unreasonable manner, increasingly flagged and flagged. An old friend and brother-officer, paying a flying visit to that famous health-resort, had scarcely been able to recognise in the morbid, gloomy man his former chum who had been the very life of the regiment. He had spoken seriously to the Major himself and to Mrs. Drayton, and predicting sagely that Brown's liver was affected, and that there was nothing like a good German watering-place for setting an Indian up again, had finally succeeded in persuading his friend to promise that he would give the Homburg Kur a trial when the season came round.

When once Major Brown had made this resolution he became restless and impatient to carry it into execution. He was almost incapable of concealing from Nettie's affectionate watchfulness his anxiety to leave Bournemouth and her society. He went up to London at Easter and tried to recover his spirits by a strong dose of society, theatre-going and pleasuring. But this sort of life soon bored him, and he found that he missed the quiet smoking-room of Sea View Villa, and the friendly fox-terrier. He returned to Bournemouth only to discover that the smoking-room had undergone a thorough spring-cleaning during his absence, which had left it not nearly so comfortable as his fancy had pictured it, and that the fox-terrier, having been slightly bitten in a game with another dog, had been destroyed by order of Mrs. Drayton, who lived in hourly dread of hydrophobia.

When June came, therefore, Major Brown, no longer able to restrain his impatience, started for Homburg, although he was warned by his whole acquaintance that he would find the place " bitterly cold, completely given over to Germans, and not a soul there that he knew."

Pacing up and down the Kur-Haus terrace on this June evening he was obliged to own that the prophecy had been entirely fulfilled. He was sick to death of the daily routine of baths and water-drinking ; the Kur had not worked that miracle for his health which he had been led to expect ; he pined in vain for the sight of an English face ; and worst of all, not the loudest clatter of German

mirth or German talk could drown that low, echoing refrain which continually rang in his ears. Wherever he went, whether he slept, eat, drank or played, it sounded, sometimes quite near, sometimes very far away: "O! wenn es doch immer so bliebe!"

Major Brown turned in his walk sharply and muttered a low imprecation. He would leave Homburg immediately. The place was a dead take-in. He was rather worse than better since he had come there. He would start to-morrow for Switzerland and wait about somewhere for warmer weather and the stream of English visitors which was sure to bring some old friends with it. He had been a great fool to take Compton's advice: the man was always talking about what he did not understand. He believed he was poisoning his system with those confounded waters. Yes, to-morrow he would go. He would find out at once when the express left.

"Roger, do put on Sara's shawl for her! It is so chilly and she will certainly catch cold in that thin gown."

The low, peevish tones struck suddenly on Major Brown's ear through the din of foreign voices. In a moment there rushed on him an overpowering darkness and then a flood of bright light. He was once more in the crowded drawing-room of Sea View Villa. Standing in his corner he watched the Bournemouth ladies smile and talk; and on his ear there crept Rubinstein's subtle melody and Sara Levison's voice rang out again.

He passed his hand over his eyes and looked round in a dazed manner. Quite near him on his right hand was a little group of three people. He recognised them all again in a moment. Mrs. Wilson was languidly fanning herself, although, as she had said, the evening was decidedly chilly. Her son bending over his cousin's chair was wrapping round her a soft white shawl. Miss Levison's face, slightly turned towards him, was pale and still and beautiful as on that far-away December evening.

Major Brown, quite unconsciously, stood still so long gazing at the group that at last Mrs. Wilson, who sat facing him, was attracted by the stationary watcher. She recognised him immediately as an Englishman and put up her glasses to make a more thorough investigation of him. Then some shadowy recollection of his face came to her and she cried with a little scream of relief, which betrayed a whole history of previous ennui: "Is it possible that I know you? Surely I am not mistaken!"

In another moment the Major, hat in hand, was introducing himself, and was being welcomed to their circle by the Wilsons and by Sara Levison.

IV.

MAJOR BROWN did not leave Homburg the next day.

He began suddenly to feel the benefit of the Kur. His spirits returned, his appetite improved, and really when once one got used to

it, it was a very jolly life. It was wonderful what a sensible fellow Compton was, though certainly a little faddy.

The brown-eyed flower-girl at the corner grew quite used to the red-haired Englishman who stopped every morning punctually at half-past seven to select her finest roses and freshest ferns. Then it was such a blessing to have someone to talk to in one's own tongue, and to feel oneself of some use in the world again. Roger Wilson, delicate and very irritable, as the Major soon discovered, was often unwell, and for many days together he would be quite unable to wait on the ladies. Besides, he spoke no German. So the arrangements of the little expeditions and nearly all the business transactions speedily devolved on the willing Major.

It is well-known that four persons make a very much pleasanter party than do three, and it soon came to be an understood thing that Major Brown should fill the vacant place in the carriage, the empty chair at the little dinner-table, carry Mrs. Wilson's shawls and foot-rest, and in general make himself useful and agreeable.

If the evening were cold and dark, and Mrs. Wilson or Roger were afraid of sitting out to listen to the band in the Kur-Garten, Major Brown would return with them after dinner to their rooms, and Sara would sing to Roger's accompaniment. Though she never repeated the song he had first heard from her, her voice had always the same effect on the Major, and as he listened he would fall into a kind of trance, her notes seeming to reach him sweet and strong, but from some great distance. At such times he would sit with his eyes fixed steadily on the girl's beautiful, peculiar face, till Roger's scowls or impatient exclamations if his cousin did not render the music as he thought fit would rouse him.

Young Wilson's conduct to the girl was a continual puzzle to the Major. He never seemed to leave Sara for a moment, following her even in her every movement with his large, strange hazel eyes.

Sometimes he would hang over her with gentlest gesture and softest word. At another time his tone would be almost insolent and his speech sharp and bitter. At first on such occasions Major Brown's impulse to kick the younger man was almost irresistible. But he soon began to look out even eagerly for these displays of temper, affording him as they did opportunity to admire Sara's beautiful conduct. She was never impatient with Roger, never offended. She always seemed to soothe and comfort him. Major Brown also noticed that when young Wilson was in one of his evil moods—they invariably followed a bad night, or were the accompaniment of a head or back-ache—Miss Levison would devote herself wholly to him, treating the Major himself with a curtness almost amounting to brusquerie.

To her aunt also, whom the Major had early classified as a most provoking and tiresome old lady, Sara was always gentle and kind. She bore with her peevishness and whims with a wonderful patience, and should any little contretemps or accident arise, she would always

somehow manage to bear it alone or to share it with the Major. For Mrs. Wilson, indeed, the strong man felt a certain amount of pity since he had learned that she suffered from heart-disease in its most advanced form, and he enjoyed the little secret conspiracies with Sara to preserve her aunt from all unnecessary annoyance. But for Roger he felt no such compassion, and he watched him with a jealous interest which could not but strike him sometimes as almost ludicrous when he stood in his great height and strength beside the misproportioned, feeble young man.

So the days passed on, very swiftly now, and Major Brown never paused to ask himself whither he was drifting—where he had already drifted.

Sometimes, indeed, the sight of Nettie's even, Italian handwriting smote upon him with a sharp pain, as of a sudden discord. And sometimes the same feeling seized him as he strolled up and down of an evening with Mrs. Wilson and his eye would suddenly fall on the couple in front; the girl's tall, upright figure, and Roger not infrequently leaning wearily on her arm.

On one of these occasions Mrs. Wilson had favoured him with a little burst of family confidence. "Is not Sara beautiful?" she had said, waving her fan in the direction of the shadowy white figure. "It is quite a wonder to me that with all her fortune and looks she is so little spoiled! And she suits my Roger so admirably! No one, not even I myself, can manage him as she does. And he is perfectly devoted to her. They have been engaged since they were quite children; and, indeed, I do not know what Roger would do without her. For he is far too delicate for any profession, and I have not enough to make him independent. Really it is quite wonderful the way that good comes out of evil! For we were all so angry with my sister when she insisted on marrying Isaac Levison! Not that it was anything really so very bad after all—for of course he was in a very respectable business—a business man——"

They had drawn nearer to the others, and the slim, white figure suddenly turned on them. The Major fancied that in the uncertain light he caught a faint flush creeping up over the still face.

"My father was not in *business*, Major Brown," she said quickly; "he was in *trade*. A tradesman, you understand, and in trade he made our money." Then she turned again abruptly and walked on with her cousin.

Major Brown felt a thrill of unreasonable pride pass over him. He burned to catch her hands—to kiss them reverently—to tell her that he worshipped and adored her, and that nothing she or her father had been or had done could ever alter that fact. He walked on in a kind of delirium, quite unconscious of poor Mrs. Wilson's explanations and apologies for the "terribly uncomfortable way Sara sometimes has of putting things."

V.

"JUST wait a little longer, only a very little longer, Miss Levison. The night is so beautiful, and the band is going to play all my favourite airs. Let her stay a few more minutes, Mrs. Wilson, and I promise you I will bring her back quite safely, and we shall be home not so many minutes after you."

Major Brown spoke imploringly.

It was a lovely night, still and warm, and the gardens were brilliantly lighted up by innumerable Chinese lanterns, twisting serpent-like round the trees and stretching far away down the long, winding paths. They had all been sitting as usual quietly and happily on the Terrace, Major Brown relating to them stirring tales of Indian adventure, when Roger had suddenly risen, declaring himself tired and chilly, and proposing an immediate return to their rooms. Obedient as usual to his every caprice Mrs. Wilson and Sara had prepared to acquiesce, when Major Brown found himself possessed with a desire to oppose the young man's peevish will. He carried his point, and had the satisfaction of watching Roger walk gloomily away with his mother, leaving himself and Sara alone. At that moment he realised that he had never before been quite alone with Sara.

"Shall we not go and sit under the trees? We should hear the music better there," he suggested, a gentleness in his tone that converse with the girl alone developed.

She consented, and the two left the terrace.

It was darker here, and there were not many people. The band was playing some low, soft melody which did not demand entire attention, but seemed pleasingly to connect their fragmentary talk. They were both inclined to be silent. Sara sat very grave and still, her dark hair the only relief in the general whiteness of her face and figure.

Presently the music gradually changed, there was a murmuring accompaniment of minor instruments, and the first violin took up the air. Clear and lingering the notes hung on the quiet air. The Major's heart beat higher and faster and his breath came quickly. Then mournfully and wailingly the violins sighed out the refrain, echoed in softest murmur by the whole orchestra: "O! wenn es doch immer so bliebe!"

It was over, and Major Brown turned abruptly to Sara. His eyes were bright, and his face slightly flushed. He had forgotten everything but that they were alone together, that the moments were flying, that the time would not remain.

"It is the song I first heard you sing," he whispered breathlessly.

She turned to him with a little pleased surprise. "And you have remembered it?" she questioned.

"Remembered it!" he echoed scornfully. "Why, it has never

left me since that day. It has rung in my ears day and night, and when I have closed my eyes I have seen you standing there, so beautiful and so mysterious, with all that passion in your voice, and that stillness on your face."

"Ah, don't!" There was a startled, almost frightened look in the grey eyes into which he was now gazing as he leant towards her. But she could not stop him. It was too late. All the love that he had silently cherished for so long in his heart was now visible on his face and sounded in his quivering voice. He could no longer master himself, and he would not notice her appeal.

"But I must, Sara. Don't you see that I love you—that I have loved you ever since I first saw you? No—no," interpreting her faint, distressful gesture: "I know that there is no hope for me, but I must speak and tell you. I cannot help it any longer. You will say it is my own fault—that I knew all along that you were promised to another—that you loved another. So I did, but ——"

He broke off suddenly, for he saw that her eyes were full of tears, and her head sank.

"Dear!" he cried, touching her shoulder with his trembling hand, all the passion gone and a great tenderness coming into his voice: "Dear! have I hurt you? I did not know; believe me, I did not know. I would never have spoken if I had. But," breaking out again with sudden eagerness, "must it be? Oh, why need it be? Must you sacrifice yourself? Sara, you shall not! If you have no pity on yourself you must have pity on me. You dare not ruin *both our lives*."

But she was looking up again now, quite calm though her face was almost deadly in its pallor.

"I shall not ruin both our lives," she said, "and I dare not even think," her voice trembled somewhat, "of what you have been saying. We have both our duty to fulfil. You are engaged, are you not?" She looked at him with her honest eyes, and though there was no reproach in them the Major's face crimsoned and he ground his teeth. "And so am I. And I think we have both been very wicked. Roger trusts me utterly, and he cannot do without me. I promised him when I was very young that he never should have to. And I must keep my word. "You," looking at him with a sweet, trembling smile, "you are a soldier, and a brave man. You would not hurt the woman who trusts you."

She paused a minute and then rising said: "Come, it is time we were going home."

They walked back in complete silence, but at the door she, woman-like, looked up and asked gently: "Do you not think me right?"

"I cannot, I cannot," he cried passionately, and hurried away.

VI.

MAJOR BROWN took a short tour, visiting Wiesbaden and Frankfort, to give himself time to think. At the end of five days he returned to Homburg considerably calmer in mind and resolved on a plan of action.

He would appeal once more to Sara. He felt positive now that she loved him, and why then from a mistaken sense of duty should she sacrifice both herself and him to an ungrateful and exacting task-master? But though able to ascribe Sara's conduct to a mistaken sense of duty, he felt bitterly that he dared not try his own by the same liberal standard. He could not yet think of Nettie Drayton without a feeling of burning shame. He tried not to think of her at all. And indeed it was as much to be free from the inevitable bi-weekly Bournemouth letter as for any other reason that he had quitted Homburg.

Swinging up the Luisen-Strasse he kept Sara and her sacrifice firmly before his mind's eye. Such a life as she was preparing for herself! To be the wife of a man like young Wilson, the slave of his every whim, the object on which every temper would be vented! The mere imagination of it made him hot.

At the same instant he caught sight of Roger a few paces in front of him. He would have escaped down a side street, but that the young man suddenly turned, and seeing him, stood still waiting for him to come up.

The Major noticed that his face was even paler and more haggard-looking than usual, and that there were deep, dark rings round his eyes.

"How are you?" he inquired, touched in spite of himself at the sight; "and how's your mother?"

"She's dead," answered the young man, so abruptly and harshly that the Major staggered and leant up against a wall for support.

"Dead! What do you mean? What a ghastly joke!" he stammered at last, trying to force a smile. "Why, you frightened me out of my wits."

"We were far more frightened," replied the young man doggedly, and in the same harsh voice, "and not a soul here that we could turn to. You were conveniently out of the way of the bother. She was taken bad directly we got home last Monday night. When Sara came in at last I was nearly dead too with terror and misery. She sent for a doctor, but it wasn't any good, and she died that night. She's buried, too," he added after a pause, looking up with a kind of impish triumph that gave the Major a hysterical desire to laugh.

"But how terrible! and how dreadful for Miss Levison. What is she going to do?" he inquired presently.

"I think it is far more dreadful for me, considering that she was my mother and not Sara's," Roger snapped out. "Not but that she

was always very good to her, too ; quite as good as if she had been her own daughter. What's Sara going to do, did you say ? Why, nothing very particular. We shall be married, and then go into Italy immediately."

"You will be married—you and Sara—Miss Levison ! Oh, but surely not ? You are dreaming—it is impossible—so hurried, and so quite unnecessary."

The Major could scarcely find breath with which to speak, and hardly knew what he said. He felt a wild longing to seize Roger by the throat and strangle him on the spot.

"It is neither impossible nor unnecessary, and I am not dreaming," replied the other, quite coolly. "On the contrary it is quite possible, and I deem it quite necessary, and I should think I knew how to take care of my cousin without anybody's interference. We shall be married to-morrow morning, and leave immediately afterwards for Italy. The chaplain here knows all about us, and he has simplified matters for me."

An unnatural calm, the birth of despair, fell upon the Major, and he spoke in a strangely quiet voice.

"Can I not be of any use ? May I not call and see Miss Levison and ask her if I may do anything for her ?"

"No, certainly not," was the decisive answer. "My cousin is not seeing anyone and does not want to be visited. But I will give her your compliments." And turning, Roger Wilson went swiftly in at the door of his lodging and slammed it after him.

Major Brown walked unprotestingly away. When he reached his hotel he passed straight out into the garden and sat down on the first bench. The July mid-day sun glared down on him with burning heat. Myriads of flies and gnats whirled round his head and buzzed in his ears, but he was quite unconscious of all physical discomfort. He sat immovable, trying to realise that one great impossible fact : Sara Levison was to marry her cousin Roger Wilson next morning.

How long he remained out there in the garden he did not know. Loungers came and went ; a little party of tourists ordered beer, and drank and smoked, within a couple of yards of him, but he was not even aware of their presence.

At last he rose with a heavy sigh, and went indoors.

In the hall he met Roger Wilson. The young man looked shy and even sheepish.

"I have been looking for you, Major Brown," he began awkwardly. "I wanted you to do me a favour. It is well to be out of the way when a favour is wanted of one."

"But I have come into your way," the Major responded briefly.

"Yes, true. And it's really more of a favour to Sara than to me." Then looking round crossly at the knot of servants and visitors : "Must we stand in the passage ? Don't they give you a smoking-room, here, or a reading-room or something ?"

The Major led the way silently to a deserted parlour. Roger shut the door after them, but he did not sit down. He went and leant against the white china stove and looked curiously at the Major, who had dropped into a big arm-chair. At last he spoke.

"You are not offended with me, are you?" he said deprecatingly, and the Major caught the shadow of a certain wistfulness which he had sometimes observed in his manner towards Sara. "Because I did not wish to be uncivil. I am naturally short-tempered, and of course the events of the last few days ——"

He stopped and drew his long, bony hand over his eyes. When it dropped again his face was tinged with colour and his eyes shone.

"But, as I was telling you, we are to be married to-morrow, and we have no friends here. Not a soul that we know beside the chaplain and yourself. Would it be asking too much," again he fixed his scrutinising gaze on the Major's face; "should you greatly object to—attending the ceremony—to—a—in short—acting as Sara's relative and giving her away?"

He turned, and looked at an inappropriate engraving of Werther's tomb on the wall behind as he finished his sentence.

Major Brown sprang out of his chair and came and stood beside him.

"Did you tell Miss Levison that you were going to ask me?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Roger, still with averted look. "She said I had better not. But I know she would like it. It is so solitary for a girl without a single——"

"I will come," interrupted the Major impulsively. "Give me the hour."

"Half-past ten, and I thank you," said Roger as he left the room.

VII.

MAJOR BROWN had sent the sublimest bouquet that Homburg could offer to the bride, and had dressed himself with due care for the ceremony. He was only eager now for it to be over.

As to what would happen afterwards he was not conscious of any feeling of curiosity; he had not energy to form any plan. He was dimly aware that the Bournemouth letter which he had found awaiting him in his hotel on his return the day before had been not from Nettie but from Mrs. Drayton: that it had announced the fact that by Nettie's express desire her mother was writing to cancel the long engagement of eight years' standing, which at the same time she denounced in emphatic language as a youthful and inconsiderate folly. Nettie had at last agreed to the curate's patient suit, Mrs. Drayton said, and they all felt that this was in every way a most suitable marriage for a young lady of her convictions. Mrs. Drayton had not been able to resist adding the satisfaction which she herself

felt in the assurance that now Nettie's modest fortune was in no danger of being squandered in smoke and fiction, but would be well laid out to the edification of saints and reclaiming of sinners. At another time Major Brown would undoubtedly have felt relief at the burden that was thus unexpectedly lifted from his shoulders. But now he experienced if anything a little more ache about the heart, a feeling of increased loneliness. No one wanted him; he was altogether unnecessary. After to-day he would indeed be quite alone in the world.

Roger hastened to meet him as he turned off the road, and made his way towards the dark, silent little church.

Through a long night of sleepless reflection Major Brown had puzzled over the young man's behaviour to himself. He found himself wondering what Roger's motive in bringing him to his marriage could possibly be. He was well-nigh sure now, since he had thought the matter anxiously over, that if it was indeed Sara's wish it would have been thwarted. He felt angrily that he had been quite wrong in consenting to attend the ceremony, that he had only put himself and Sara in a painful and ridiculous position. It would have been much better for both of them if he had left Homburg the day before, directly he had heard Roger's first announcement. Why should he have allowed himself to be used as a tool in this fresh freak of young Wilson's suspicious spitefulness?

"Upon my word, you're pretty casual for an impatient bridegroom!" Roger called as the Major drew within earshot.

Major Brown paled to the lips at the taunt, but he made no answer. Was he not about to give to Wilson of his own free will all that he held dear in life? Why, then, should he grudge him the venting of his fretful temper?

Roger continued, with a sneer, as the Major entered the church:

"I wonder if Mr. Cross will make an equally eager bridegroom? But, oh, no! of course Miss Drayton, the Helen of Bournemouth, is infinitely more attractive than poor Sara. Cross will be at the church before his best man."

"What do you mean?" cried the Major, turning with ill-suppressed wrath on his tormentor, who was watching with evident satisfaction the effect of his words. "You have already heard the Bournemouth gossip? Well! I don't grudge Cross his good fortune." Roger sneered again. "He will make Miss Drayton a very much better husband than ever I should have done. And I am doing what I can," his voice broke a little, "to show you that I do not grudge you your good fortune either—your great happiness. Pray let us leave the subject."

While Major Brown had been speaking, Roger, with an apparent indifference to his words, had been leisurely detaching a little white rose-bud from his button-hole.

"You have not got any button-hole," he said, ignoring altogether

the other's anger. "It's not the thing that I should have one while you have none. See," he added, holding out the flower, "I give this rose-bud to you just as I am giving her to you. I think there is some likeness between them."

He drew back the flower, and looking at it kissed it softly. Then he thrust it into the Major's hand.

"Put it in and look sharp," he said ungraciously. "She will be here in a minute."

Major Brown gazed at him in speechless astonishment.

"I do not know what you mean," he said at last, hoarsely.

"Then you must be most uncommonly thick-headed," was the other's sharp retort. "Do you mean to tell me that you are not perfectly free, now that the distinguished Cross has cut in and cut you out? If you are not, it would have been wiser to have told me so before I had made all arrangements with the parson and with Sara. For Sara, she's perfectly free, too—now that you are. You would not have me marry a girl that wants to marry another man, would you? Though she was far too good ever to say so," he added gently to himself. Then raising his voice again: "And can't you understand either," he said; "are you so utterly dense, that perhaps it was not hard for a man in my position to see how matters were going—to see how far you two cared for each other? I had it all out with Sara yesterday afternoon, directly we heard the news from Bournemouth. She couldn't deceive me; she hasn't deceived me all along, though she tried her best, poor child, and I told her so. I haven't known her all these years and ——"

He broke off with a great gulp, and hurried up the aisle and down again before he resumed with more than his former harshness of tone:

"I would have called and explained it all to you yesterday evening," he said, "only you were so confoundedly curt in the afternoon, and I dared not trust myself. But I suppose you got my letter?"

The Major dumbly shook his head. A knowledge which he could scarcely realise was beginning to steal in upon him. He could not speak. He hardly knew whether to trust his senses or to believe that great trouble had altogether bereft him of them. Only he grasped desperately the little white rose-bud as at least something tangible and conveying a distinct meaning amongst all this perplexity.

"No?" cried Roger, in answer to the Major's mute movement. "Then I shall summon the landlord immediately!" He stamped his foot furiously, apparently only too glad of some outlet for feeling. "The infamous fellow! I'll have him imprisoned, or fined, or both—if one can get any justice in this land of official blockheads. But," he went on, suddenly calming down again, "I can attend to that afterwards, when all this fuss is over and ——"

The full meaning of Roger's words had at last burst upon the

Major. He made a step forward and caught young Wilson by the two shoulders, since at the first sign of his approach Roger had resolutely clasped his hands behind his back. It was never an easy matter to the Major to express his feelings, and his words came slowly now, and with more than usual difficulty.

"You are giving Sara, Miss Levison—your cousin, your betrothed—to me," he gasped, each word bearing its individual emphasis of emotion, his whole face and figure working with his tremendous excitement. "You are the most generous of men. You bind me under a life-long debt. How can I ever repay you?"

Roger, who was quite powerless in the Major's enthusiastic grasp, was obliged to look up and face him.

"Stuff and nonsense!" he said. "You call me generous, and then talk of repaying me! How do you suppose it is possible to do that? Could I ever have repaid you if Sara had been yours, and you had given her up to me? And do you suppose that if she loved me but one half as she loves you I would ever have given her up to you? No—no—no—no."

His voice died away in a kind of sob, and he was altogether silent for a few minutes, while Major Brown, awed by the expression of his face, stood watching him. Then Roger turned on him once more, with greater vehemence than before.

"Great fool!" he said. "Do you suppose that I am giving her up to *you*—that I am thinking of *you* at all in the matter? If I had wished to marry her myself could I not have done so? Had I not got it in my power?"

"Yes, yes," put in the Major soothingly. But at this well-meant interruption Roger glared on him, his eyes flaming like fire, his face white and distorted.

Major Brown bit his lip and turned away.

In an instant Roger was at his side again.

"I beg your pardon," he said humbly. "You must take it that I am not always answerable for what I do, and that this strain is almost more than I can bear. You will take Sara where you like—I am going into Italy—I need not ask you to be good to her. And," he paused mournfully, "if ever the devil is too strong for me and I cannot fight him alone, you will not grudge me one hour with Sara, listening to her sweet voice, holding her dear hand?"

Before the Major could answer, while, with his eyes dim with unaccustomed feeling, he still grasped Roger by the hand, Sara entered the church alone.

She was dressed in a travelling-gown of some soft grey material, and was without ornament of any kind, save for the Major's flowers which she carried. Her face was very pale. There was something so forlorn and melancholy about the beautiful young girl as she came all unattended to her wedding that the Major's heart went out to her in a great bound of pity and reverential love.

She did not seem surprised to see the two together; she only smiled a little on them. And it did not strike the Major then as strange that she should take everything so much for granted. To himself it was all such a surprise, as yet such an inexplicable mystery, that he forgot to wonder at any one particular more than another. Roger handed him a little plain gold ring, and he could but obey his directions and follow his prompting.

Sara took her cousin's arm up the church. The clergyman was already there, and hastened through the service with a speed for which Major Brown inwardly thanked him. The place was so dark and still, the voices so quiet and the general hush so profound that the whole scene passed more like a dream than a reality. Major Brown recognised dimly at last that the ceremony was over and then that Sara had turned shyly to him. He bent low over her hand which he still held, and pressed his lips to it. Then a great calm succeeded the raging storm of mingled thoughts and feelings that seemed to eddy through his brain, and still keeping her hand he drew her towards him, and kissed her on the forehead, and then on the lips, calling her his wife.

Roger's impatient voice called to him to hasten.

Then followed the signing of names and the common-place assurance of good wishes from the chaplain, who at the same time evidently regarded the newly-married couple with some suspicion, as not being in the entire possession of their right minds. And then, before the Major knew rightly what was being done, Roger had taken Sara by the arm with some of his old imperious roughness, and led her aside to the door. He spoke there with her for a few minutes in a low, hard whisper, and then she returned to Major Brown, her eyes full of tears.

"He is gone," she said, putting her hand into his. "And now," with a quiver in her voice and a long-drawn sigh, as if at length her heart had found its rest, "we have the world before us. Where are you going to take me?"



ABOUT SNAKES.

SINCE the day when Adam and Eve were tempted by the devil in the form of a serpent, a malignant enmity has existed between mankind and the whole serpent brood. The low, cunning, grovelling nature of the serpent has ever rendered it an object of horror and hatred, and it has been regarded as an emblem of the evil principle ; of the spirit of disobedience and contumacy.

But there are exceptions to the rule among the nations of the world. The Phœnicians adored it as a beneficent genius ; the Chinese consider it as a symbol of wisdom and power, and the Egyptians regarded it as the author of all good, and worshipped it as the emblem of eternity.

In India, also, the snake, and especially the cobra, the most venomous of the whole tribe, is looked upon as an object of veneration, and it is by no means uncommon at the annual Snake Festival to witness crowds of devotees carrying food and bowls of milk to propitiate, as they would fain believe, the Snake-god. A vain hope ; for the census annually taken by Government of the destruction of life by wild beasts, proves that the ratio of death by snake-bites is more than double that caused by all other wild animals.

Deadliest of the whole race is the far-famed Cobra di Capello, or Hooded Cobra.

Averaging about four feet in length, it has been known to attain even six or seven feet, but it possesses two characteristics peculiar to itself.

One, that when enraged, or prepared to fight, it is able to erect itself about two feet from the ground ; and the other is the expansion of the neck and hood. This hood, which is ornamented with two large eye-like spots united by a curved black stripe, gives the snake a very fierce and sinister aspect.

The cobra, however, is famous not only for the deadly power of its venom, but for the singular performances in which it plays a part. There can be no question of the remarkable power which is exercised in India by snake-charmers over these venomous reptiles, which they handle with skilful impunity and cause to sway in time to certain musical sounds. This power is chiefly owing, I believe, to the perfect confidence and courage of the snake-charmer, and partly also to the peculiarly indolent character of the snake, and the soothing effect of music. Having witnessed a performance in which I was very closely concerned, I can vouch for the fact that it is not only the harmless snakes—those whose poison fangs have been destroyed—which are the playthings of the snake-charmer ; but those which are

absolutely untamed, and whose very stroke is death, become subdued by a process which only a brave and skilful man knows how to use.

With this prelude upon snakes let me relate a few anecdotes concerning them, some of which I have had from the lips of friends ; and some from my own personal experience.

Snakes, snakes, snakes, of all shapes, sizes and colours, have I met with during my sojourn in India. From the majestic boa-constrictor, or python, sixteen or eighteen feet long, with the girth of a man's body, to the tiny "whip-snake," a foot in length, and no thicker than the lash of a whip.

Under my pillow, in my boot, in the garden-path, in the thatched roof of the bungalow, and even on the key-board of the organ in my church—in all places and at all times have I come across them.

The first incident I have to relate occurred at N——, to which station I had been preferred as curate in charge.

"Venus!" What sunny memories that name recalls; what tranquil hours in the flower-girdled parsonage! Venus had, and ever will have a cherished place in my affection and my memory. For more than two years she was my constant companion, my bosom friend. She accompanied me in my walks, sat at my table, slept on my bed. Moreover was not Venus the goddess of beauty as well as of love? Full of grace was her every movement; with a skin whiter than the driven snow; large lustrous black eyes, which Juno herself might have envied—who could compare with her?

Ever responsive to my call, she returned my love by unmistakable signs; and more than all, she saved my life. Such was Venus. And after all, Venus was only a cat; a snow-white Persian cat.

But to my narrative.

On a certain Sunday morning in the year 1858 I rose, as was my custom, at about five o'clock, and as I put my feet out of bed, Venus, in her fondling way, came to wish me good morning.

After some mutual endearments I walked towards the bath-room, to indulge in that first and greatest luxury of an Indian day, a cold bath. My bed-room was divided from the bath-room by a dressing-room, and as I entered the latter, Venus, as if impelled by some curious instinct, hurried on before me. Instead of entering the bath-room, however, to my surprise she suddenly paused on the threshold and stood as if transfixed. Her fur stood on end, making her twice her usual size; her eyes were dilated with fear and rage, and her speech spat out anger.

I remained motionless for a moment, for I felt that danger was at hand, though I knew not in what shape it threatened me; but only for a moment; for immediately out of the depths of the bath-room a huge cobra sprang forward and barred the way.

With erected body, eyes scintillating with devilry, and expanded hood, it swayed to and fro over the cat, hissing with fury. I wish I could have photographed that picture of the cat and cobra ready for

the fray—Venus crouching as if about to spring at its neck, and the snake poised above her.

But a prompt action on my part saved poor pussy. Having a towel in my hand, I waved it suddenly before them, and this caused the cobra to slink back into the bath-room. I then shut the bath-room door, and Venus and I were safe for the nonce.

There was the enemy secure in his prison, and the next thought was how to "do" for him. Going out into the verandah I called my servant, told him what had occurred, and bade him go into the bazaar and fetch some snake-charmers.

Presently they arrived with two baskets of live snakes, a small tom-tom and musical pipes. They sat down at a distance of about thirty feet from the door of the bath-room leading out into the garden, opened their baskets and began their music. My servant then pushed open the door of the bath-room, and we waited the result. Stirred by the music, the snakes in the basket soon became uncommonly lively, twisting themselves about in fantastic contortions, and two or three twining round the naked bodies of the snake-charmers.

Whether attracted by the music, the presence of other snakes, or the possible hope of escape, I know not; but soon his satanic majesty, a very demon of a cobra, par excellence, emerged from the bath-room, raised himself on the first step, and, with violent hissing, seemed to challenge and defy us. This lasted for three or four minutes; then the cobra descended to the next step and went through the same performance as before, then to the third and fourth steps, till at length he reached mother earth. Fully twenty minutes was occupied in this cautious progression, and during the whole time the music became more and more vigorous and the snakes more and more lively.

Having reached the ground the cobra made for his brother snakes, and soon approached their baskets.

Then, to my utter amazement, one of the snake-men ran his hand up the cobra's neck and gripped him tightly under the head, so that he was harmless. It was a plucky act, for the cobra was a monster of nearly six feet; and how he did lash about him with his tail when thus captured! Thwack, thwack, thwack; his blows on the man's naked body sounded like distant pistol-shots.

But *cui bono* all this storm and tempest? he was a prisoner, and the evil hour had come.

The first thing the snake-charmer did was to root out the fangs with a small steel instrument—in fact, to draw his teeth. Having done this and rendered the cobra innocuous, he threw him on the ground among the other snakes. And then what a devilish revelry ensued. Twistings, contortions, intertwinings, hissings—it was a comedy of angry but harmless snakes! But the end had come, and I was to have my revenge for my own as well as Venus's sake, so

giving the man a couple of rupees, he then and there despatched the cobra.

Venus all this time was safe in my arms, looking on calmly at this curious scene, and gloating inwardly, no doubt, at the destruction of her enemy.

But she had certainly saved my life, for if she had not come into my room when I got up, I should have gone to my bath, and the noise of splashing water would have disturbed the cobra, who was concealed by the tub, and in all probability it would have struck me a fatal blow.

It had got into the bath-room through the hole out of which water ran into the garden when the bath was emptied, and had feasted so greedily on frogs (which gained admittance by the same entrance) that it became too bloated to return.

It was certainly for me a narrow escape, and how could I do otherwise than cherish the memory of Venus?

But let me tell you how another greedy cobra came by its death.

We were astonished one day at hearing sundry and manifold reports, like the firing of a revolver, issuing from the "godown," or store-room.

Calling the butler, who had the keys, we opened the door, and a strange spectacle met our gaze. A cobra had managed to get into the room, and casting about for food had hit upon an empty biscuit tin, about twelve inches by six, in which some particles of sweet biscuit remained.

The cover had not been cleverly opened, the edges being jagged; and it was partly pressed down, but not so close as to prevent Mr. Cobra getting his head within the box to lick up the crumbs. But the problem was how to get it out again? The more he tried the more difficult did it become; in his rage the hood expanded and was lacerated by the sharp edges of the tin, upon which he began to lash about him with his tail. Pop, pop, pop went bottles of beer and champagne, which he knocked over and broke. It was this noise, resembling pistol-shots, which attracted our attention and signed his death-warrant.

He was quite at our mercy, and a few well-adjusted strokes put an end to him; but surely it was a stern caution to snakes that "he who prigs what isn't his'n, when he's caught," well, may get something worse than "pris'n."

Many of us know what it is to have a presentiment of evil in our waking hours; to some it comes in their dreams.

"My dear," said Mr. F—— to his spouse, waking up one morning; "I have had a strange dream. I dreamt that we were sleeping upon a cobra."

"What an old goose you are," was her retort. "How could we be sleeping upon a cobra? One would think you had taken more than was good for you last night."

"Well, my dear," he meekly replied, "I did dream it, and I only hope it isn't true."

The next night he dreamed the same dream, and in the morning there was a repetition of the same colloquy, Mr. F—— being more than ever convinced that they were harbouring an enemy, while his loving spouse declared that he must have been in a very peculiar condition to have dreamt the same ridiculous dream a second time.

"Well," said he in bland tones, "I tell you what it is, my dear ; if I dream that dream again to-night, I'll have the mattress opened in the morning, and then we shall see who's right and who's wrong."

Agreed !

The next morning on waking up he shouted : "My dear, I *have* dreamt the same dream again, and if there's not a snake in the bed I'll eat my head !"

Both of them having partially dressed, the servants were called, the mattress taken off the bed and ripped open, and lo and behold ! there in the midst was a cobra, snugly coiled up. How it had got there was easily explained.

The mattress had been put out into the garden to air, and there being a small aperture in the side, the cobra had spied the hole, and thought he might as well make himself at home there as anywhere else. I need not add that he was speedily despatched. But what a triumph for the husband, and how crestfallen looked his gallant spouse !

He, however, good man, chucked her under the chin, saying good-humouredly : "Now, my dear, I hope you'll believe me in future, and not accuse me of taking too much when I haven't touched a drop of liquor ; however, we'll have a bottle of champagne to-night for dinner, and drink confusion to all the tribe of snakes."

The following incident is not without a touch of grim humour.

Said my friend L—— to me one day : "Come and stay with us for two or three days at the Hill. G—— and I will be very glad to see you, and the change will do you good."

"By all means," I replied ; "I shall look forward to it with much pleasure."

"Very well, then ; come this evening. If you will call at my office about five o'clock I will drive you up."

So the arrangement being made, at five p.m. L—— drove me up in his buggy to the Hill.

We reached the bungalow about six, and found G—— standing at the entrance to welcome us. But his words betrayed unusual excitement.

"I am awfully glad, old fellow, that you have come," he said, "for we have had such an extraordinary scene this afternoon, and I am afraid that both Tip and Tim (two favourite terriers) are dying, if not dead."

"Why, what's been the matter?" asked L—— as he jumped out of the buggy. And then G—— related the following incident.

"I was sitting in the verandah reading, when I was disturbed by the dogs barking and scratching down the ferns out of the rockery. We had always thought, if you remember, that that hole among the stones only harboured Bandikoots, but there was much more than a Bandikoot there, for after scratching awhile the dogs ferreted out a cobra! Out he came with a hiss, but Tip was a match for him, for he flew at the brute and caught him just under the head, with an unmistakable grip, and his teeth well set into his throat. Tip, plucky little terrier as he is, lugged and lugged away, and presently, with Tim's assistance, dragged out the cobra, *vi et dentibus*. Nothing would induce Tip to let go, though I gave him a few cuts with my stick, but Tim got hold of the tail in his teeth, and the two dogs, with the cobra at full length between them, rushed up and down the garden and among the shrubs till they had nearly pulled the beast in two. When the snake was almost done for they let him go, and I killed him outright, but the dogs are covered with blood, and I am not sure whether they have not been bitten, and had to pay for their rashness."

"Where are the dogs?" asked L——.

"I put them into a tub in the verandah," G—— replied. "I poured a bottle of brandy down their throats, put some straw in the tub, and laid them down, and I fear it's all up with them!"

"Let's come and look at them," said L——.

There was the tub, with Tip and Tim within, covered with blood, and still as death. Their bodies were still warm, but no coaxing could induce them to move, or even to open an eye. And no wonder! for so far from having been bitten, they were safe and sound—only that they were both dead-drunk from the quantity of brandy which had been administered to them.

In the course of a few hours, after a long sleep, they were as lively as ever, and having been well washed and scrubbed, appeared once more on the scene, two of the smartest little terriers that ever you saw.

This somewhat curious phase of pugnacity must have been hereditary, for Tiny, their mother, had an encounter with a cobra some little time before in precisely the same spot, though not with the same luck, for Tiny was single-handed in the combat and received a fatal blow.

Perhaps it was the same cobra, and Tiny's twins had a glorious revenge for their mother's death—who knows?

I have described how snakes are charmed or fascinated; do they ever charm or fascinate their victims? I believe they do. I will give an instance of this. One evening, towards dusk, I called on Colonel A——, of the artillery. As we were talking we heard a peculiar cry—as of an animal in pain. We listened for a short time; then I

said: "I'll be bound that's a poor devil of a rat or a frog being 'jadooed' (fascinated) by a cobra. Let's go and see."

We went to the end of the verandah, whence the noise proceeded, and saw in the dim light a cobra in the path below, erect and swinging himself to and fro.

About a yard in front of the cobra was a large frog, giving vent to the most painful cries, for it must have felt that the slightest movement on its part would have sealed its fate.

Colonel A—— ordered two of his servants, with lanterns and sticks, to approach the brute from opposite sides. The sudden light and sound of footsteps disturbed the cobra's little game; he tried to escape but it was too late. A smart blow disabled him and he was then easily killed, while "froggie" leaped away, his safety secured, and his cry of pain changed into a croak of joy—spared, let us hope, for many "a wooing!"



P A R T E D .

LIGHT of my life! Though far away,
My sun, you shine;
Your radiance warms me every day
Like fire or wine.

Life of my heart! By every beat
This sad heart gives
It owns your sovereignty complete,
Through which it lives.

Soul of my soul, supreme and strong,
Eyes of my sight—
Together we can do no wrong,
Apart, no right.

Hope of my world, through whom my cross
I am strong to bear,
My only gain, my only loss—
My one despair.

My only joy, as far above
Me, desolate,
As is the splendour of our love
Above our fate:

We are one, and sin, my only sweet,
No more in this
Than he who feels his own heart's beat
And knows it his.

E. NESBIT.

D I V I D E D.

BY KATHERINE CARR.



CHAPTER VI.

"HEARTS' DIVISION."

THOSE first few weeks at Camper, in delicious summer weather, were a mixture of bitter and sweet to the young de Kériadecs. No one could have been thoroughly unhappy or out of humour, roaming along the sea-shore of the beautiful, rugged coast, or through the more sylvan loveliness of the inland scenery ; not even a born-and-bred Parisienne, who affected to disdain rural charms. Denise left off complaining of her lot ; but was too proud to acknowledge even to herself that Camper was becoming endurable to her, if not at times actually pleasing and attractive. With a congenial companion there is no saying that it might not have been as charming as it was possible for any place at that distance from Paris to be. But unfortunately her husband was not congenial to her, and, with the best intentions in the world, it was hardly possible for him to become so, under the present state of affairs.

The manner of her enforced return to Camper had been too undignified for her to forget or forgive the author of it. It made her position more or less that of a prisoner, a delinquent, whose lord and master had signally triumphed over her, in a way too rough and summary to be quickly pardoned. There was a constraint between them, a studied politeness, a tacit avoidance of all subjects likely to raise a discussion, that seemed, little by little, to estrange them more and more from each other, without any tangible cause. Between husband and wife the smallest rift, morally speaking, is as difficult to pass as the widest ocean. Without perfect trust and sympathy the relations will of necessity be strained and forced, and true friendship as effectually prohibited as by actual bickering and dissension.

Raoul felt himself so utterly powerless to win Denise's affection that he learnt by degrees to suppress his own for her. He was too shy and diffident to force upon her a love that only wearied and annoyed her.

She was very kind and sweet to him—too kind, he thought ; for it was a kindness without warmth, a lesson learnt by rote, practised for the sake of duty ; and, in its quiet indifference, so hopelessly difficult to fight against. Sometimes she forgot herself and became the gay, fascinating Denise he had first fallen in love with ; and at such times it required all his self-control to preserve his cool and studied calm-

ness, even though her very charms hurt him, with a jealous fear that the day must come when she would shake herself free from him and return to that hateful world of Paris, to be flattered and courted and admired by a crowd of senseless sycophants.

It was this very jealousy, a pardonable fault under the circumstances, that occasioned their first open difference, not many weeks after their return to Camper.

Raoul was not a martinet, and he had no wish to interfere in his wife's private affairs. But, without any thought of prying, he could not help noticing how constantly she received letters from her friend Comte d'Edmond. Without being ridiculously prudish, he considered d'Edmond a most undesirable acquaintance for any woman; he did not scruple to tell Denise so, and to advise her to keep him at a proper distance. And one day, when he brought her a letter in the familiar handwriting, he ventured to suggest that the regularity with which the correspondence was kept up might be too flattering to Monsieur le Comte's already over-sufficient amour-propre.

"I think you misjudge him," said Denise. "He was very kind to me in Paris. You do not, surely, desire me to give up all my former friends and shut myself up like a nun? He writes amusing letters, and tells me how everything is going on in the old life. It is a kind of link to the past."

"I only suggest that it is as well not to let him think he has any influence over you," answered Raoul. "Perhaps, stupid as I am, I understand his tactics better than you do. He is clever; without doubt he can make himself agreeable; but, for all that, he is an unprincipled little marjolet. Not good enough to be your friend, Denise."

"But one cannot be ungrateful. He has a good heart au fond; and he writes merely to give me a little distraction."

"He knows, then, how wretched you are?"

"He knows that the country is not very lively; anyone might know that," said Denise, rather irritably. "If you wish to read his letter, here it is. It is only on the subject of some books he is sending me. I suppose you do not consider it sinful to read, although it is often amusing. At all events, I hope you will permit me to do so."

"I shall never ask you to give up any amusement that will add to your happiness. No, I do not wish to read your letter," he said, as she held it out towards him; "I only ask you to be careful."

Then, before leaving her, he added, as though struck by an after-thought: "Will you let me look at the books when they come?"

"Of course, mon ami, you may look at them. I shall not keep them under lock and key," answered Denise, shrugging her shoulders; "but I should have thought that I was old enough to choose my own literature."

"No woman is ever old enough to do without care and protec-

tion," he said, yearningly, with a sudden feeling of pity as he looked down on her in her white dress ; so pretty, so childlike, so frail, so helpless to fight the battle of life alone. "I want to help you, my Denise, if you will only let me."

"Thank you. I know you are very kind, very forbearing. I must give you a great deal to put up with," she said.

But her voice was listless. Reason told her she ought to be grateful ; but she was prompted by no warmer feeling. In the same way, had he struck her, though she would have been fiercely indignant, she would not have been hurt or wounded in her heart. He could not make that beat one degree faster, were he kind or cruel ; and he was painfully conscious of the fact.

Some days after this conversation, the box of books arrived from d'Edmond. Raoul, coming into the hall that afternoon, found Denise on her knees unpacking them and dipping into the volumes that appeared to her most interesting.

"Here are the books. You said you wished to see them," she remarked, without looking up, and continuing to read the one she held in her hand.

"There is quantity, at any rate. It remains to be seen if the quality is equal to it," said Raoul, turning the volumes over, one by one, with his riding whip. "Poems, I see. I am no judge of them, you will say. Eh, Denise ? Well, I am not. Certainly the literature in this house is sepulchral — there I agree with you. *Pristi !* This is a queer book to send you ! Zola's latest. Zola, Flaubert, Zola, Zola ! I congratulate your friend on his taste. Not one of them is fit for you to *touch*." And he tossed them contemptuously, one after the other, into the box.

Denise looked up at this, and, with a flush of colour, asked :

"What are you doing ?"

"Doing ? Why, packing the foul things up again. What is that you are reading ? Let me look. 'Sappho ?' Bah ! Please give it to me, Denise."

She closed the book but kept her finger in the place as a mark, and looked up with the well-known expression of defiance in her deep blue eyes.

"You do not intend to take them from me ? Raoul, that is too much. I will not submit to it. I will not allow you to check me in every harmless amusement that does not happen to suit your tastes. Please leave my books alone."

"Believe me, they are not fit for any woman to read. Be reasonable, Denise. Give them to me."

"I will not. It is you who are unreasonable. If I find that they are any of them bad books, of course I shall not read them. But to condemn them wholesale is perfectly ridiculous, and I shall not do it. Do you imagine that no one has any honour, any sense of right or wrong, but yourself, Raoul ?"

"Curse the man," muttered Raoul ; "curse him !"

He was working into one of his rages. Not against Denise, but against the man who was doing his best to corrupt her fair and innocent soul. To his almost Puritanical ideas of female excellence and chastity it seemed to him sacrilegious to so much as mention such books to a woman. And that a profligate like d'Edmond should seek, by such dastardly means, to lower the mind of *his* wife, of his Denise, was just one of those cases that goaded his hot temper into ungovernable fury.

"You forget that he is my friend," said Denise, in a low voice.

"I do not. I wish I could. I forbid you to correspond with him again. Every one of these books shall go back this very day. I loathe to see you touch them."

"Take care, Raoul," she answered, biting her lips ; "take care."

She was standing up facing him, her hands tightly clasped together, her head thrown back proudly and her brows drawn together as was their wont when she was angry.

But there was an indescribable expression in her eyes that used not to be there ; something like fear, as though she saw a peril drawing near from which she could not escape. The dark panelling set her off in a dusky frame, against which she stood, fair and slim in her white dress, with Raoul, tall and fiery, standing by her side.

For a moment he gazed at her in silence, his face working with emotion. Then, with a gesture that was almost like despair, he turned impatiently away, whistled to his dog to follow him, and walked out into the blazing sunshine.

"Fools, fools !" he said to himself, as he swung with long strides towards the sea. "Two flints constantly rubbing together. Better never have been born at all, than with a raging temper that governs one as easily as a baby."

Luckily for him, he could walk off his excitement by a long tramp over the country, or, better still, by an exhilarating sail over the bounding waves, sometimes alone, sometimes with Yvonne Hévin. To lose himself, as it were, in the elements was always his panacea for mental or bodily distress. But even this could not always banish Denise from his mind, or lift from it a dull sense of oppression, like the coming of a distant thunderstorm.

When he left her, Denise did not move. He had frightened her to-day for the first time, and she did not like the sensation. His strength seemed to make him so much her master. What if he should turn upon her, as he had every cause for doing, and hate her ? Formerly, their quarrels had left her perfectly indifferent, but to-day their little outbreak had chilled her. She felt terribly lonely and helpless, with a shrinking fear of the future.

Presently her eyes fell on the books, lying, as he had left them, in an untidy heap. She stood looking at them with a frown.

"Ridiculous," she said at last.

Nevertheless she knelt down and packed them into the box, and when that was done, wrote the following note :

"DEAR COMTE,—I am grateful to you for your kind wish to enliven me in this solitude. But you will understand me when I tell you that you have misunderstood my literary tastes, and that I must seem so rude as to return you your books. Yours gratefully,

"DENISE DE KERIADEC."

When Raoul came home he had calmed himself. He went straight to his wife and apologised for having lost his temper before her. But he did not, as he had always done before, kiss her and ask her to forgive him, and both felt instinctively that the gulf was slowly widening.

The next day another box of books arrived for Denise. Raoul had sent for them after their first conversation on the subject, hoping to please her by the attention. But now the pleasure was gone for him, and he scarcely listened to her thanks.

With the fall of the leaves a period of stormy weather set in, imparting to the Château an air of weird melancholy which might have had a kind of charm to those who were happy in themselves, but which was sorely depressing to one already suffering from low spirits. The wild, grey days were to Denise but an emblem of her own life—unloved, unloving—passing in an endless monotony that was only broken now and then by a passionate craving for she knew not what. Every day she lost a little of her girlishness, a little of the light-hearted gaiety that had carried her over so many matrimonial breakers; and every night Raoul asked himself the question: "Will the storm break to-morrow?"

His attempts to encourage a friendship between Yvonne and Denise had been useless. Yvonne stubbornly resisted all overtures from the Parisienne, much to Raoul's annoyance. It was the first time the girl had ever contradicted him, and the reason of her sudden obstinacy never entered his head for a moment.

But it was not only Yvonne who treated Madame de Kériadec with contempt. The people of the neighbourhood had lately assumed a curious stiffness whenever they chanced to meet her, at church or elsewhere. Had any rumour reached them of her folly in the summer, or was it only a revival of their old prejudice against a *ci-devant* actress?

If the latter, Raoul determined to overcome it; and partly with this object, partly in the hope of enlivening Denise, he one day suggested to her that she should invite some of her friends to Camper, and that they should take the opportunity, at the same time, of giving some little entertainment to their neighbours.

Denise eagerly accepted the proposal. That very day she wrote to certain of her friends, and began concocting schemes for their amusement at Camper. It was finally agreed that the entertainment to the

country neighbours should take the form of theatricals ; it would give Raoul the chance of publicly showing his entire satisfaction with his wife's antecedents, and would also keep the guests in the house amused and occupied ; besides which, the preliminary arrangements would prevent the time from hanging too heavily on Denise's hands during the two or three weeks still to be passed before her friends' arrival.

Invitations were sent to all the principal families of Audierne, Quimper, and other towns within a reasonable distance of Camper. In that sparsely inhabited district there was but little difficulty in deciding who should and who should not be invited. The only question was, would there be a large enough audience to make it worth while giving an entertainment of that nature ?

But gradually a new and unexpected difficulty presented itself.

One by one the invitations were answered—and declined.

It seemed unaccountable to Denise. The more she thought over it, the greater was her surprise ; for, though never very cordially received by these honest bourgeois folk, they had, up to the present, always remembered that she was Madame de Kériadec, a person of some social standing, with whom it was diplomatic to keep on friendly terms.

She learnt the truth as last ; and it opened out to her a whole vista of humiliating verities to which she had hitherto been blind.

One afternoon, when she was busy manufacturing certain necessities for her theatrical wardrobe, she heard Raoul exclaim, in a tone of surprise :

"Denise ! You have triumphed. Here comes Mademoiselle Mathilde in person to pay her respects to you. I thought she would yield if only out of curiosity."

"Impossible ! But yes ; you are right," said Denise, joining him at the window. "And Yvonne with her. To be visited by Yvonne is an even greater honour than to be visited by Mademoiselle Mathilde. I mistrust their friendliness," she added, shaking her head. "I always feel that between them they will some day work me mischief."

"That is a fancy. Mademoiselle Mathilde is sour as vinegar ; but Yvonne's brusquerie is all on the surface. You do not do her justice."

"She will not let me. She would never tolerate your wife, my good Raoul. Besides, I am not a Kernéwote, and that puts me beyond the pale of her forgiveness. Here they come. I must try not to shock their sensibilities."

Even Raoul could not help perceiving a kind of ominous air about both aunt and niece as they entered the hall and solemnly seated themselves side by side on two straight-backed chairs facing Denise.

There was a sullen consciousness in Yvonne's downcast eyes that made Raoul uneasy ; it was so unlike her usual fearless gaze that it suggested the embarrassment of shame. Mademoiselle Mathilde, in

her straight gown and severe bonnet, looked like an implacable judge waiting to pronounce the words of doom over some unfortunate criminal. Her long fingers, encased in grey woollen gloves, tightly clutched a roll of printed paper ; doubtless it was the fatal document holding the death-warrant of her victim.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mademoiselle Mathilde," said Denise graciously. "It is the first time I have had the honour of receiving you."

Mademoiselle Mathilde bowed stiffly without replying. Evidently she did not come as a friend.

Denise, who had a keen sense of the ridiculous, felt her lips twitch. How comical they were, these unconventional Breton folk ! Perhaps the late eccentricities of the weather might be a congenial topic, and from that she could veer round to inquiries on the condition of the fishermen's families in Camper, in whom she presumed Mademoiselle Mathilde took an interest. But even this did not carry her far. Mademoiselle Mathilde's replies were monosyllabic ; and she so plainly indicated that Madame de Kériadec grossly neglected her duties as châtelaine that Denise sat rebuked, wondering what she should talk about next.

Raoul rushed to the rescue, clumsily enough, as events proved.

"Of course you are coming to our little entertainment, Mademoiselle Mathilde?" he said. "You have received your invitation?"

"We have received an invitation from Madame," rejoined Mademoiselle Mathilde ceremoniously.

"And you will come, I hope?" said Denise. "We count upon you to help us to entertain our guests. Will you not? You and Yvonne?"

"My niece will not attend the theatricals," said the old maid frigidly.

Yvonne coloured violently, but remained silent, with her rebellious eyes lowered.

"Dame! That is unkind to us," put in Raoul. "I expected Yvonne to be my rock of refuge on that fearful evening. She and I would both be fish out of water. Yvonne, you must persuade Mademoiselle to bring you."

Yvonne glanced hurriedly at him, with the beseeching look of a child mutely pleading for forgiveness. But before she had time to speak, Mademoiselle Mathilde answered for her.

"No. Yvonne will not come. I myself shall not be there to bring her."

"Scarcely a civil way to decline an invitation," thought Denise ; but aloud she only said brightly that she hoped Mademoiselle Mathilde would think better of her decision when the time came.

"So many people have declined," she added innocently. "One might think there was a conspiracy against us."

A grim smile slowly parted Mademoiselle Mathilde's compressed lips.

"Madame has, then, not found her invitations generally accepted?"

"No, indeed. Is it not a little hard on our first attempt at hospitality? Ah, I am sure you will come. Yvonne, cannot you persuade Mademoiselle?"

How beautiful she was! How gentle! How irresistible! How soft and sweet the tones of her voice! Yvonne's lips quivered.

"I will try. I cannot tell," she murmured, incoherently.

Mademoiselle Mathilde rose, gathering her shawl round her spare shoulders, and slowly unfolding the mysterious journal she had been nursing so tightly:

"Perhaps," she said deliberately as she laid it in Denise's hand, "if Madame de Kériadec will deign to peruse the little notice I have underlined with ink the mystery will become clear to her. I regret that it should have been my duty to draw her attention to what had been better buried in oblivion. I wish Madame good afternoon."

"Merci bien, Mademoiselle," said Denise, smiling carelessly; "the notice, be it what it may, shall receive my best attention."

She watched her two visitors pass out of the room with a slight feeling of contempt. She could not understand the stubborn Breton character, slow to forget an offence, fixedly deliberate in its revenge; so totally unlike her own quickly generous nature.

Raoul had taken the journal out of her hand, glancing hastily at the underlined paragraph. Then with a low exclamation of anger he crumpled it up and flung it on the floor.

"Yvonne! Yvonne!" he called, authoritatively.

The girl, who had her hand on the door, hesitated.

"Yvonne," he said again, "I ask you, as a favour, to remain a moment longer."

Mademoiselle Mathilde had already hurried out of the Château. Yvonne made a step forward to follow her; then, with a sigh, stood motionless. When Raoul spoke it was impossible for her to disobey; even now, when, for the first time in her life, she was ashamed to meet his eye; when, for the first time, he addressed her with suppressed anger and scorn in his voice.

"Why do you detain her?" said Denise.

"I wish her to promise to do all in her power to persuade Mademoiselle Mathilde to come to our reception. Not only that, but to induce her to lend her influence in persuading her friends to come also. It is not much to ask. Yvonne is aware that when she wishes it she can generally make Mademoiselle Mathilde do what she likes."

"Really," began Denise, "if it come to that, we need not be indebted to the patronage of Mademoiselle Mathilde."

"Well, Yvonne?" repeated Raoul.

"I will do as you desire," she answered very low, the hot tears gathering in her eyes.

"And you yourself will spend the night of the theatricals with us here in the house?"

She raised her eyes imploringly. But there was no pity in his face, only a half-mystified indignation. The punishment was better merited than he could realise.

"If you wish it, yes," said Yvonne.

He had turned from her to Denise, and she was free to follow her aunt; yet for a moment she hesitated.

"It shall be a success," she said suddenly in her passionate, low voice; then turned and shut the door violently behind her.

Denise lifted her eyebrows.

"She is mad, that beautiful little savage friend of yours, Raoul."

"She is a woman."

"Poor Yvonne. Do not be too severe on her, Raoul."

"It was spiteful of them to come like that. You have not read the journal."

"Ah, true."

She lifted it from the floor where he had thrown it, smoothed it out on the table, and began to read, at first carelessly, then with gradually increasing surprise and shame.

It was one of the leading provincial journals, one that circulated amongst all the neighbouring towns, and every word of which was considered infallible by a bourgeois population. The paragraph underlined by Mademoiselle Mathilde was an extract from a Parisian *chronique scandaleuse*. Denise had seen it some weeks ago; it had been tactfully sent to her by Madame de Fréville, and had given her but slight annoyance at the time. It referred to herself; giving a humorous and highly-coloured account of Mademoiselle Lenard's summary withdrawal from the stage by an incensed husband, and her lamented retirement into private life as Madame de Kériadec.

It was easy to picture the effect this, unfortunately veracious, anecdote would produce amongst the unsophisticated inhabitants of Cournaille. They had regarded Madame de Kériadec with suspicion from the first. It was not respectable that the head of one of the oldest families in the country should marry an actress: no good could come of it. And this spicy bit of Parisian gossip had come to make confirmation doubly sure. Madame de Kériadec's reputation was lost. Only a miracle could save it.

As Denise read the malicious report, for the first time in her life she knew what it was to be humbled to the dust. It was not only herself she was considering but her husband, on whose name she had brought disgrace by her cruel thoughtlessness.

"Can you forgive me?" she said presently, looking up from the paper. "I have deserved the rebuke. It is my fault that we cannot contradict it."

"No. We cannot give it the lie," he said drily. "All we can do is to brave it out and live it down."

"It has taken its time getting here. If all news in these local journals is equally stale it is no wonder Cournaille is not very civilised. So we must give up the theatricals."

"Give them up? Certainly not. The idea of showing that one is beaten! No. We will let them see that ——"

"What? That you are not ashamed of me—of having married an actress."

He said nothing. She *had* brought shame upon his name. He was a de Kériadec, proud, honest, a little narrow-minded, like all his race. It was impossible to forgive her at once.

"How cold he is," she thought; "how terribly cold. But," she added aloud, "if they all refuse to come, will it not be a more glaring fiasco than if we gave it up now?"

"They will not refuse. A certain number will be influenced by Mademoiselle Mathilde; and others will follow. I can trust Yvonne. She will not let it be a failure."

"I do not care to be indebted to Mademoiselle Mathilde. Still, if you think it best, so be it. We must do our utmost."

"Who can have sent the report?" mused Raoul; "that is what passes my comprehension. If I could find out, the trick would not be soon repeated."

Denise smiled to herself. She was a woman. It was no mystery to her who had worked the affair. But she was generous to a fault, and she preferred to keep her knowledge to herself.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INVASION.

SORELY as it went against the grain, Yvonne Hévin kept her promise to Raoul. The moment it dawned upon her that the disgrace of Madame de Kériadec was also a reflected disgrace on her husband, she bitterly repented the malicious jealousy that prompted her when she drew Mademoiselle Mathilde's attention to the fatal journal. She knew well enough that everyone in the neighbourhood would have seen it, and that a few judicious words from her aunt would render Denise's contemplated entertainment practically impossible. It was easier to fan the general disapproval than to allay it, when once it had taken fire in the provincial mind. But by representing the harm the scandal would do to Raoul himself, Yvonne contrived to alter Mademoiselle Mathilde's righteous determination to have nothing more to do with such an immoral character as flighty Madame de Kériadec. The girl even forced herself to accompany her aunt in a weary round of visits to the leading residents of Audierne, some of whom allowed themselves to be persuaded to give Madame de Kériadec one more chance, for the sake of her husband, who, after all, could not

be allowed to suffer for his wife's faults. When it becomes a question of personal amusement people are very ready to offer a salve to their consciences ; and festivities were of such rare occurrence in that primitive part of the world that it became no great act of virtue to condone Madame de Kériadec's indiscretions in this particular instance.

The invitations began to be accepted, not so eagerly as Denise had originally expected them to be, but enough to prevent the entertainment from being an absolute failure. Once get these good people into her house, and Denise was confident of success. Was it likely that dull Cournaille would be able to resist the charm that even fastidious Paris had declared to be irresistible ? She was determined to make that impossible.

At last the long-looked-for week arrived, and for ten days the quiet old Château de Kériadec was transformed into a very Babylon of mirth and frivolity and youthful folly, gay voices and laughter echoing through the sombre rooms and corridors.

The guests consisted of the de Fréville, Comte d'Edmond, de Caromont, and some other of Denise's Parisian friends—a light-hearted, thoughtless set, easily moved to laughter, and with countless little jokes and mutual secrets that seemed very pointless to such an unsophisticated person as Raoul de Kériadec. He felt that Denise did not do herself justice in her choice of friends. They were not her equals either morally or intellectually, and only appealed to the lighter side of her character—her little vanities and weaknesses. As a reaction from the stiff constraint in which she had been lately living, she flung herself heart and soul into this brief week of gaiety. Never had she seemed more joyous, more restlessly eager for one fresh excitement after another. Had her friends been the dullest people in the world they must have felt the contagion of her radiant spirits ; and as it happened that they were all of them the very reverse of dull, she had the effect of exhilarating them to the highest pitch of careless merriment.

Raoul, who began to feel his position as master of the house rather a sinecure, had secret misgivings as to the result of all this folly. His high-spirited guests were quite capable of purposely startling beyond all bounds the good bourgeois who were to act as audience on the night of the theatricals. He could only trust in Denise's honour and common sense to keep her amateur "troupe" in order ; but the peals of laughter that formed a running accompaniment to the rehearsals made him vaguely uneasy. Altogether, poor Raoul cordially detested that week, as well as every one of the people who had come with so much commotion and restlessness into his peaceful home. His only escape from these was in his little sailing-boat, where, if nowhere else, he was absolutely his own master. The first day, delighted at the idea of any novelty, Madame de Fréville had begged him to take some of them for a sail ; and it must be owned

that that was a day which Raoul always looked back upon with pardonable amusement and satisfaction. He brought them all home, from Comte d'Edmond to Madame de Fréville, in a state of pitiable dejection, all their gaiety, for once, completely vanished, and their sudden admiration and rapturous praises of the sea converted into an undisguised horror and contempt. Yet it must be added that the ladies of the party began to have a kind of patronising "culte" (as they called it) for Monsieur de Kériadec, now that they saw him in his own territory.

"My dear," said Madame de Fréville to Denise, "your husband is splendid. He makes all the other men look like barbers' blocks. If you could but get him to be a little more polished and suave in his manners! What he wants to make him adorable is a little worldliness."

"Do you think so?" answered Denise; "I think it is just his want of worldly polish that makes him what you call *splendid*. He is at least a man. In Paris they are mere fops."

After that one day on the sea none of them again troubled Raoul in his boat. He was no longer wanted. He was free to spend his time as he liked, so long as he interfered with no one's amusement.

It was a chance for Yvonne Hévin which, had she been as worldly-wise as some of the fashionable women at the Château, she would not have let slip through her fingers. But she was not worldly-wise, poor Yvonne; all her actions were the outcome of momentary impulses, which were as innocent in their motive as their results were sometimes unexpected and tragic.

All she thought of when Raoul, glad to escape from his wife's friends, fetched her one delicious breezy day to sail with him to Audierne was that he had forgiven her after their quarrel on the day of Mademoiselle Mathilde's visit to the Château. Ever since that little episode she had been passionately longing to hear him speak to her in the old friendly manner. And now he had come of his own free will. Had come back to his little wild girl-friend, away from those Parisian people with their beautiful clothes and fair faces and interminable chatter; had come back to her, Yvonne Hévin, who had nothing to offer him but her unreasoning admiration and devotion; who loved the things he loved—those fresh, healthful country pleasures which seemed so terribly irksome to his wife.

So it happened that the treat he had given Denise did not contribute much to the de Kériadecs' mutual sympathy. If anything, it helped them to drift farther apart; and amongst Denise's friends there was not wanting at least one who was ready to lend his aid in widening the gulf.

Comte d'Edmond had come to Camper prepared for conquest.

It piqued his pride that Denise was able so long to resist his attractions; though at the same time her resistance gave an added

zest to the excitement of the siege. He had no doubt as to his ultimate success, especially with a woman whose domestic affairs were in such a tangled skein as those of Madame de Kériadec. But it was necessary to set to work with caution. She was, in some respects, so innocent, so exasperatingly cold and indifferent. D'Edmond soon understood that it was useless to attack her through her heart, for, if she owned such a possession, she kept it so carefully concealed under a mask of gay cynicism that its existence had to be taken on trust. But she was proud—that she could not hide. And through her pride he was able to make some slight advance.

By the end of the week a new thought had dawned upon Denise's mind, stinging her sensitive feelings like a knife; it was the faint suspicion that perhaps, after all, her husband did not love her as he had done when first they married. In her girlish self-sufficiency such a contingency had never struck her as within the bounds of possibility; and, since she was a woman, need we add that, in spite of the utter unreasonableness of her conduct, the very supposition of his growing indifference filled her with acute and bitter indignation? Not that she would betray her sense of humiliation! The last few days of her friends' visit her spirits seemed to overflow; and when at last the eventful evening of the theatricals arrived, she completely won the hearts of all the good Provincial folk, who were, most of them, seeing her there for the first time. Her beauty, her bright, unaffected acting, and the sweetness of her manner charmed them all, as she had foretold that it would do.

"Though he may be ashamed of having married an actress, he shall see that she is at least good enough for the people he has brought her to live amongst," was her thought as she heard one after another singing her praises. "He dare not feel ashamed of me to-night."

So the theatricals were a success—a great and unqualified success; which was equivalent to saying that Madame de Kériadec had triumphed over the combined forces of scandal and malice. Mademoiselle Mathilde, stern and forbidding from the beginning to the end of the proceedings, had to acknowledge to herself that she was no match against the fascinating young creature, with her dangerous arts and graces.

As for Yvonne Hévin, for a short space she was completely and entirely at the mercy of her rival. It was Denise's way of punishing her. She was *determined* to touch Yvonne to-night. She had never acted better; and when she came to the one scene in the little comedietta that gave any scope for pathos or passion she exerted herself to the utmost, directing her efforts, as it were, to the quiet little figure by Raoul's side, whose dark, melancholy eyes had grown more and more rapt and intense as the play proceeded.

It was the first time Yvonne had seen acting of any kind. It

excited her beyond expression ; her emotional nature seemed to be carried away with the strange delight of it all. To her it was no story, no play of fancy and invention ; but a real human episode being lived out before her eyes, deeper and more thrilling than real life, and with something of beauty and glamour flung over it that was, to her highly-strung soul, like the rich perfume of exotic flowers or the passionate strains of a violin.

When she awoke from her rapture of interest and excitement, the tears were streaming down her cheeks and on to her hands. She had yielded to the spell of the sorceress. Over her, too, Madame de Kériadec had triumphed.

"Oh, I hate her ; I hate her !" cried the poor child to herself : "She can charm us all, whether we will or no. To Raoul alone she is ice and snow. And he is miserable. I can see it in his eyes. Oh, that I could free him from her !"

CHAPTER VIII.

A CRISIS.

THE next morning all the guests left Camper except Yvonne Hévin. She too would have fled back to her home on the sea-shore if Raoul had not asked her to wait until he was free to walk there with her. When the rest had gone, she and Denise sat together in the hall, Yvonne dreaming by the wood fire that flung its cheerful glow over the oak walls and parquet floor, and Denise lounging on one of the broad window-seats. They were both feeling relaxed in spirits now that the excitement was at an end.

"Ah, là !" said Denise presently, yawning, and clasping her hands behind her head with wearied indolence ; "how terribly *triste* it will be here now."

"One could not go on with excitement for ever," said Yvonne ; "it would weary one to death. And it can never be dull here, at Camper."

"I wish I could agree with you. But I cannot. Now, to-day, I am dying of ennui."

"Which has been our fate for the last ten days—has it not, Yvonne ?" put in Raoul's voice, from the corner where he was writing his letters. "I could not have put up much longer with Madame de Fréville's incessant interrogations ; and as for the giggles of that de Caromont—Ciel ! how he did giggle. What with women and frippery and theatrical rubbish, I felt like a bull in a china shop. Now to-day one can move."

As he spoke he stretched and shook himself, as though to rid himself of all remnants of last week's oppression ; and Denise, glancing casually at him, was reminded of Madame de Fréville's remark that by his side other men looked like barbers' blocks.

"I feel like an emancipated schoolboy," he went on. "It was as much as I could do not to shout as they drove away. And what a day for a sail! I should like to see de Caromont out in this wind. What a colour he would be when he came home—green as cabbage, n'est-ce pas, Yvonne?"

"It is very windy," said Denise. "Are you going out, Raoul?"

"Yes. When I have finished my work."

Both women looked up at him. Long ago he had left off asking his wife to accompany him on any of his expeditions by sea or land. They had not amused her; it had been more convenient for both of them to pursue their own occupations alone, instead of trying to keep up a pretence of interest in each other's.

But to-day she felt that any change would be welcome. If she had not been ashamed of confessing such an alteration in her sentiments, she would have frankly told him that she felt a sudden curiosity to learn something of the wild pleasure he seemed to take in the sea; and perhaps in time she too might share in the exhilaration of it.

"I shall soon be ready," went on Raoul, after a moment. "What do you say to coming with me, Yvonne?"

"Oh, yes," answered Yvonne, her eyes brightening; "that I will, if you have not had enough of me."

"Not I," said Raoul quickly; "we are pretty dull here, Denise and I. Are we not, Denise?"

"Dull?" said Denise, in a low passionate voice; "*miserable!*"

She did not know what prompted her to show her feelings so plainly at that moment. Something in Raoul's voice irritated her—his way of looking at Yvonne—she knew not what. She had flushed crimson, and her breathing seemed to choke her.

Raoul had sprung up, and was standing by Yvonne; but his face, grown very stern and hard, was turned to his wife.

"Yes," he said, slowly and distinctly; "she has told you the truth, Yvonne. Miserable is the right word."

There was an awkward pause. Yvonne looked anxiously from one to the other, the colour rising in her dark cheeks; and when Raoul abruptly left the hall, she fixed her piercing eyes on Madame de Kériadec.

Denise was drumming with her fingers on the window pane, her eyes grown very cold, with a dangerous, hard brightness in them. She met Yvonne's gaze defiantly, and shrugged her shoulders.

"So! We are an amiable couple, are we not, my little Yvonne? Is there no recipe for breaking off unsuitable marriages?"

"You forget what you are saying. You have made him miserable. Have you no sense of duty, no feelings, no gratitude?"

"Sense of duty, nil: feelings, ditto. Gratitude to whom, and for what?" said Denise flippantly. "I am a horror. That need not distress you, Yvonne."

"You are very cruel. You made him love you, and then you deceived him," murmured Yvonne, trying to keep calm. "You do not know how grand he is. Everyone but you knows it. They all worship him about here. There is no one like him—no one——"

She dropped her voice with a suppressed sob.

"I deceived him? You are honest. Well, I like honesty. It is true, I daresay, I behaved incorrigibly. But he drove me to it. Why did he marry me if he is such a prude that I shock his sensibilities?"

She spoke with smothered emotion. D'Edmond's insinuations were still rankling in her self-love.

"He is not a prude. Only you believed that one half of mankind always laughed and was happy; so you wished to join it. Raoul knew that they are the ones whose tears are the most bitter, whose remorse is the greatest. But you would not let him save you. Before you came he was happy, and now he is breaking his heart. I cannot forgive you; I never will forgive you for what you have done to him."

Looking up at her, Denise saw a soft, tremulous light in the girl's eyes that spoke volumes. The truth flashed upon her with a pang of remorse.

Here was a woman who would have cherished as the highest blessing earth could bestow the affection that Denise, in her folly, had cast from her like a wearisome burden.

Could it be possible that Yvonne was right; and that Raoul was indeed a husband such as any woman might look up to with love and respect?

She came nearer to Yvonne and held out both her hands.

"I like your honesty, Yvonne," she said softly, "and I like you. I have always wished to be friends with you, but you will not let me. Cannot you try and forgive me for being a Parisienne?"

Yvonne's hands trembled and she would not raise her eyes.

"I cannot," she whispered; "I cannot."

After Yvonne and Raoul had left her, Denise went down to the sea-shore, hoping that a breath of fresh air would blow away both her headache and a certain uncomfortable sensation that might have been called heartache.

She felt low and depressed. The strain of the past fortnight's unreal gaiety had told upon her spirits. Both present and future presented a dreary aspect, and a strange foreboding of near and actual grief was weighing upon her. She was beginning to realise whither the growing coolness between herself and Raoul was leading them, and she dreaded, with something like horror, the life of mental solitude and heart-hunger that was opening out before her.

Formerly, through all her little discontents, unknown to herself there had been a sense of security and of satisfaction in the know-

ledge that she had a loving protector who would stand by her whatever happened, and always be ready to comfort her with devoted affection if only she would let him do so. It was not until she foresaw a possibility of this love dying a natural death for want of encouragement that she felt its value, or understood how forlorn she would be without it.

She fully realised her own unworthiness, and was ashamed of accepting so much affection, when she could give nothing in return but, at best, a cold indifference ; yet, in her womanly inconsistency, the thought that perhaps this love was no longer hers in the old passionate fervour made her heart throb with indignation. She could not blind her eyes to the fact that she had indeed succeeded in wounding, if not in slaying it altogether. Everything confirmed the suspicion. He ought never to have married her ; it was his own fault ; he ought to have looked for some good, dull, affectionate little thing, like Yvonne.

Yvonne? Ah, folly ! She indignantly thrust that thought away from her, and tried to think of something else. But it would not be thrust back. A hundred insignificant acts of Raoul's rose within her mind ; little attentions to Yvonne—passing looks—all those “trifles light as air” that are so suggestive to a morbid or imaginative mind.

“It is impossible to go on like this—impossible. I am not strong enough for it. I should break out again and again into those wretched tempers that make us both hate each other,” she told herself as she paced up and down the sands. “If it is absolutely hopeless to think of caring for each other as we ought to do, then we *must* hate each other. I cannot exist in this half-and-half state—so stiff, so cold, so unnatural ; it suffocates me. I would far, far rather the storm burst and separated us altogether. I am independent. I could live in Paris on a small allowance ; he could stay here, with his precious sea and woods and country-pleasures. If he keep them, he will soon recover my loss.”

Then she conjured up a picture of their relative positions under the circumstances. She in gay Paris, leading the restless, busy city-existence, which she had always declared was the only life worth living—amongst the crowded streets and boulevards, with their glittering shop-windows, and where there would be the constant bustle of men and women coming and going around her.

For Raoul, the changeful ocean, with its golden calms and passionate storms ; the deep, shady woods, with their summer luxuriance and autumnal glory—all the elevating beauty of that grand Nature which he loved.

She told herself that all the social advantage would be on her side. Art, literature, music—what could she have of them if she remained buried in the country ? In Paris she would be surrounded by friends, gay intercourse, wit and intelligence ; whilst Raoul, at Camper, would

grow more and more prosaic and unintellectual amongst the uneducated fisher-folk, with their rude dialect and uncouth manners.

Yes. There could be no doubt that hers would be the richest, fullest life. His would be narrow-minded and monotonous; for no one with a superior intellect and restless energy could fail to grow weary of the peaceful joys of rural existence.

So she told herself. So she tried to believe.

And yet?

What was there in this great restless sea, with its ever-varying beauty, that *made* one love it in spite of oneself? For a moment there flashed across her thoughts the simile that it was like Raoul himself in its resistless strength.

She stood there in a kind of dream, gazing at the wide expanse of ruffled blue-green water, oblivious of the flight of time until the sound of the big clock of the Château striking six reminded her that she ought to be dressing for dinner, and that Raoul would wonder what had possessed her, of all people, to forget herself in the contemplation of scenery.

But perhaps her thoughts had not been entirely taken up by admiration of the lovely view before her—the tumbling waves rushing up the beach to break in snow-white foam against the brown rocks—for as she moved away she stamped her little foot impatiently, and dashed away the unbidden tears that were clouding her blue eyes. “I wish I could love him,” she sighed; “I *wish* I could love him.”

All that day Raoul had been wondering what the evening would be like—the first that he and his wife had spent alone for a fortnight.

Would the pleasure he had given Denise, strongly against his own inclinations, have softened her breast towards him, or only have aroused fresh longings for the gay days of her girlhood? Probably the latter. The contrast between the monotony of Camper and the vivacity of Paris would be more poignant than ever; and if de Caromont and d’Edmond were specimens of the type of man she thought agreeable, it was evident enough to Raoul that he must come very low indeed in her estimation. Nor could he quite repress a contemptuous satisfaction in the thought that he was so. He would have done a good deal to please Denise; but not even for her sake would he exchange his vigorous manliness to become a lackadaisical *petit-maître*.

On his part, the last fortnight had done much to alienate him from Denise—to show him that they were hopelessly unsuited, and that a change of some sort was becoming inevitable. It was enough to gall any man to see that amongst her former friends his wife was as bright and happy as the day was long; whilst the moment she was left alone with her husband she relapsed into listless apathy.

He tried not to trouble himself about Comte d'Edmond, but failed lamentably in the laudable endeavour. Denise's little flirtations had made the impression they were meant to; Raoul was stung to anguish by an irrepressible jealousy that made him more hard and bitter every day. She hated him; that was the fact. And he? Was his love, too, only a dream—a dead thing, from whose smouldering ashes anger and hate were rising in sullen fumes? Sometimes he began to believe that it was so. If not, surely love was capable of feelings that were strangely akin to hate?

If he had allowed himself to hope for better things, and had indulged in a feeling of unacknowledged expectation when he saw the last of his unwelcome guests drive away, Denise had utterly dispelled any such illusion by her expression of unfeigned misery that morning. But even the exhilaration of sailing in a rising wind could not banish dreary thoughts from his mind. His powers of self-control and endurance were exhausted; and something like reckless despair made him feel that the only relief to his pent-up disappointment would be to emulate the proverbial worm, and turn and assert himself against his rebellious wife.

He dreaded the dinner-hour, with its unnatural constraint; Denise, cold and apathetic, at one end of the table; he at the other, unhappy and cross; the little trite remarks and studied courtesy; the moral earthquake that always hovered near with ominous tremblings.

To-night she came home late, and was more than usually silent as they sat through their tête-à-tête meal in the big dining-room, where the glowing fire lit up the centre of the room, leaving dim shadows at the corners and recesses. Even Raoul almost longed for the bright lights, the laughter and conversation of last night, in preference to this gloomy quiet. Denise made one or two fitful attempts to talk, but he was not in the humour to encourage her, and seeing this, she soon desisted. It struck him that there were traces of tears in her eyes, which were red and swollen with weeping.

Denise in tears was a phenomenon that must surely mean something serious. She was not a woman to cry over trifles. On the contrary, Raoul had often thought that she did not know what tears meant.

But at last she was touched. And by what?

By the melancholy fact that she was left alone with her husband; that she had parted from those who were more to her than he could ever aspire to be.

"She hates me. She hates me," went on the inward voice that had been torturing Raoul all day; until at last he could bear it no longer, and sprang up, exclaiming:

"It is stifling, in here. Not a breath of air. Have you finished? Shall we come into the salon?"

"Is it hot? I do not find it so," said Denise; "but I have

finished long ago, and it is always more cheerful in the salon. But how can you say there is no air? It seems to be blowing a hurricane, and it is pouring with rain. Surely you are not going out?" she asked, seeing him throw open the French window.

"Yes; to smoke. I want change, exercise. I am like you," he answered, with a short, contemptuous laugh; "I miss our late distractions and pleasant company. Does it not seem to you dreary as death to-night?"

"We ought to have kept Yvonne to cheer us," said Denise, with a little sneer that came out before she was aware of it. "That would have saved us from the monotony of an evening *à deux*, at least."

"Yvonne? I should have said one of your Parisian friends. One has always a little excitement with people of that sort, which one misses in people who have moderately high principles," said Raoul passionately.

He could scarcely be held responsible for what he said at that moment. All the pent-up misery of the last months had broken loose and destroyed his self-control at last. His was a hot, fiery nature, and this long and desperate restraint over his feelings had been like a slow torture, which could inflame but not cripple their intensity.

Both knew that the crisis had come. Denise had grown very white, with a weak, pitiful expression round her eyes and mouth. Raoul could not bear it. He flung open the window leading on to the terrace and dashed out into the wind and wet.

"She hates me. I am breaking her heart," he kept repeating to himself as he strode up and down, the cold rain beating in his face, and the melancholy wind moaning through the trees like a grim echo of his despair.

A few moments later he came in again. Denise was standing by the fire-place, one hand resting on the high mantel-piece. Her back was turned to him so that she could not see how strained his face had become, and how his lips trembled. She could only judge of his emotion by the condensed passion in his voice.

"Denise," he began in low, hurried tones, "I have been thinking it over all day—we cannot go on like this. I cannot. It is best that we should separate. I know it has been your desire for long, and now I acknowledge your wisdom. You might go back to Paris. I will arrange all about an allowance for you. But I cannot stand this any longer."

There was a short, strained silence. It seemed to Raoul that the beating of his heart might be heard, it throbbed so fiercely, waiting for her answer. When it came the blood rushed back into his white face, and the last chain between them seemed to snap asunder for ever.

"When shall I go?" she asked, without turning her head and speaking very calmly.

"Whenever you like ; the sooner it is over the better," cried Raoul hotly ; " anything rather than go on like this. For heaven's sake let us end it, and try and be happy, each in our own way."

" I, for one, am well able to make myself happy," she said, turning to him now with the dignity of an empress. Her face was still pale, but in her wide, startled eyes there was a look of fear, as though she were frightened now that the long-expected storm had actually broken.

Raoul's eyes were fixed moodily on the floor. He raised them with a flash of anger at her last words, and opened his lips to make some bitter rejoinder. Then he checked himself ; and shrugging his shoulders, as though to shake off a weight of care, he walked, without another word, out of the room, letting the door bang behind him so that the very glasses on the table rattled.

As he went Denise raised her arms with a sudden spontaneous movement, like a child that craves forgiveness. Then, recovering herself, she returned to her former position, one quick and hastily repressed sob of distress breaking from her.

" Ah ! Folly," she thought impatiently. " It is only at first that I am startled at it all. To-morrow I shall be glad of my liberty."

(To be continued.)



ODE TO THE WIND.

I NEVER see thy track, thou Wind,
 In bending fields of yellow wheat,
 I never hear thy voice behind,
 But fast my heart begins to beat,
 As if within that hollow blast
 Some spirit then had passed !

I never hear thee mighty roar
 O'er savage mountain's pine-clad peak,
 Or sweep across some barren moor
 With broken murmurs wild and bleak,
 But, like harp thrilled through every chord,
 My soul with passion's might is stirred !

I never hear thee sweetly sing
 The old sea's foaming waves to sleep,
 But in each tone dead voices ring—
 I hear them all, and slowly weep ;
 So sad with thee then seem to moan
 Those voices of the dead and gone !

JULIA KAVANAGH.

BY THE RIVER SIDE.

FOR many years now my wife and I have chosen to spend our somewhat lengthy summer holiday in the small Welsh village of A., where we settle down in the same cosy quarters, and apply ourselves with unflagging energy to the gentle craft of fishing. Last year my old friend Burnett and his bride took the shanty next to ours. Perhaps as a newly-married couple they were bound to feel the matrimonial yoke a trifle galling before they had had time to become accustomed to each other and to learn to run easily in double harness; but they certainly appeared rather an ill-matched pair, though devotedly fond of each other.

Wentworth Burnett was a typical old Indian, precise, domineering and masterful; his wife was twenty years his junior, a beautiful specimen of girlhood and as wilful and wayward and spoiled as any fair tyrant in the kingdom. Moreover, she had been his ward, and her husband continued to treat her as such, forgetting that by marriage he had entirely altered their relations to each other and that she naturally expected this alteration to be recognised. Whether in time the true womanliness and love in her would teach her to be a good wife to the man she had accepted for her husband was a question hidden in the impenetrable mists of the future; at present they were a newly-married couple, with all their troubles (and happiness, adds my wife) before them.

Evidently the young bride found life in this little Welsh village rather dull; she had boundless energy and strength, and she used to implore her husband, in the prettiest way, to take her up the neighbouring mountains.

"And we will sleep at the top of Snowdon, and see the sun rise?" she would state interrogatively.

"My dear, we will sleep in our own well-aired beds at the cottage," he would retort.

So she took the matter into her own hands, and though she could not manage Snowdon alone, for A. was some twelve miles off, she one day disappeared for a whole long morning, and when she came back confessed to having had a good scramble up to the top of the rocky precipice which rose just behind the house. There was no manner of harm in the escapade, but Wentworth was greatly annoyed and scolded her like a naughty child.

"Why are you angry?" she asked. "Where was the danger or impropriety, or anything else?"

"You would never be convinced if I argued with you till dinner-time; the danger lies in your own total disregard of it. There is

many a shaft belonging to some disused copper mine, with its mouth overgrown with bushes, which you might fall into with as little forethought as one of the luckless lambs who yearly perish there. But it's no use talking to a child like you—I can only forbid your climbing alone."

Then Letty set her heart upon learning to fish, and begged and entreated her husband to teach her; but he sternly refused, saying it was not "woman's work," and in the face of his refusal it was impossible for me to come to the rescue. She pressed her pretty lips together with ominous decision, and I wondered what would be the issue of this particular contest.

But this year there was such a long drought that the water in the streams got lower and lower, and the salmon fishing worse and worse; until at last it really was no use taking out a rod at all, except in the dusk of the evening, to try for salmon peel or "sewyn," as they are called in those parts.

My wife always liked to accompany me then, and many a time have I been glad of her timely help with the landing net. We had been married several years, and she was much too "well trained" by this time to show herself conspicuously on the bank, or to insist upon talking when I was most intent on my sport. No, she used to sit down quietly amongst the rocks with her rugs and her wraps and some knitting—which women pursue mysteriously in the dark—and then, when I wanted to see to my flies, or to put on another worm, she would light up her little lantern and save me half an hour's fumbling in the dusk. That lantern was a great help too in finding our way home over the rocks if the night happened to be a dark one.

Mrs. Burnett followed my wife's lead as to the night fishing, but with the difference inherent to her nature. For the first quarter of an hour she used to sit down meekly, out of sight and out of the way; then her white frock would come fluttering down over the rocks to where my wife was sitting, for of course Burnett and I never fished the same pool together. After a while Mrs. Burnett grew tired of my wife's society and returned to her husband, running right up to him to know "what sport" he had had and to try and induce him to let her throw a fly.

"Just once, Wentworth, please! Just once!"

I couldn't have resisted her entreaties, but he did, and then she probably retired into the background and sulked for five or ten minutes; and once she was in such a bad temper that she went home alone, but it was scarcely dusk at the time.

One evening, when I suppose the fishing was rather better than usual, we stayed down by the river till nearly midnight. I noticed Mrs. Burnett fidgeting and fluttering about for a long while, and then I forgot her very existence in the excitement of hooking, playing and landing four thumping sewyn. At length, just as I was making up my mind to reel up for the night, I saw the light of Burnett's cigarette

approaching over the rocks. At the same moment my wife lighted her lantern, for it was very dark.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Burnett quickly; "where's Letty? Isn't she here?"

"No," said my wife; "she went back to you an hour ago or more!"

"I declare I haven't seen her; she must have dropped asleep behind one of the rocks; I'll just go back and call her."

He did so whilst I reeled in my line and put on my fishing-basket. It was delightfully heavy to-night. In a few moments Burnett returned.

"I can't find Letty anywhere; she must have gone home."

"Yes," my wife assented: "of course; I daresay she got tired of waiting so long."

This was a mild reproof to me, and I felt it, though she did not mean it as such.

Our cottage was reached before the Burnetts', and so with a cheery "Good-night" we parted with Wentworth at our own door.

We had just fetched in the kitchen scales, and were busily weighing our fish, when somewhat to our surprise we heard a footstep in the hall, and opening the door, I ran against Burnett.

"Is she here?" he asked hurriedly. "Is Letty here?"

"No; why should she be?"

"Because she isn't at home. I have been into every room of the house. She *must* be here!"

My wife snatched up the lantern, which was still burning, and began to search the house—a short process, for it was such a small one. When she came downstairs again she was alone, and her face looked quite white as she put down the light in silence.

"Don't tell me she is not here!" said Burnett pitifully.

"I cannot find her," said my wife.

"Good heavens! where is she then?" asked Burnett savagely, as though I, and not he, had been the poor girl's keeper.

"She must have strayed further down the river," I said as calmly as I could. "Give me the lantern, Elsie. You and I will go and find her, Wentworth."

He followed me out of doors without another word.

How intensely lonely and dreary it seemed by the river side now, as we stumbled along through the wet meadows and over the large slippery boulders—just the spot for anyone to fall down and sprain an ankle or break a limb. But if that misfortune had befallen Mrs. Burnett she would be sure to call out as soon as she saw a friendly light, and no sound reached our anxiously-listening ears but the sighing of the wind and the rushing of the water.

"She will have come back to the pool where we were fishing, and will be waiting for us there," I said: but when we reached the place, alas! it was as deserted as the rest of the river side.

I paused for a moment as, by the light of the lantern, I could see a terrible agony in Wentworth's face.

"There is one of those accursed deep holes just up the hill above here!" he said in a voice which was firm only because it was so hard. "It is overgrown by bushes and brambles, and in the dark anyone who was climbing about and did not know ——"

This terrible thought had crossed my mind too, but I would not have spoken it for worlds.

"It is not likely," I began, but he snatched the lantern from me and climbed up the hill towards the spot. A more horrible trap it would be impossible to imagine: just where one would not notice or expect it. A deep, deep pit—once a shaft for working a copper mine, now unprotected by any rail or wall—the grave of many a wandering lamb—who shall say whether or not of some human being besides? Had this bright young girl found her death in it this very night?

Wentworth leant over its edge and tried in vain to scan its inky darkness, whilst in trembling tones he murmured rather than called the name he loved so well: "Letty!"

I turned sick as I remembered my own wife at home: yes—thank God, she was at home—but this other wife, dear as life to the friend by my side, where was she?

"She is not there," I said at last, more because I could not bear the possibility of such a thought than from conviction.

"And if she *is*," said Burnett softly, "she is beyond the need as well as the reach of all human help."

He rose from the ground on which he had been lying and strode down the hillside.

"Let us look further on; she has most likely strayed lower," I said; and Burnett followed me, yielding himself to my guidance in sheer despair. We left the immediate bank of the river and searched more carefully the meadows which lay beside it, for I felt sure that Mrs. Burnett would avoid the damp shore—and all the while we called her name till the hills echoed it far and near. But no sound answered us and no sight of her white, fluttering dress relieved the dense darkness of the night.

Some two miles below our cottage we came to the bridge which was the boundary of our fishing water. It was impossible to follow the river any further, and I turned round homewards.

"Does that mean that you too give her up?" Burnett asked, still in that firm, hard voice.

"Certainly not," I answered, though in truth my heart sank within me and her disappearance seemed a very great mystery indeed. "We shall probably find her at home by this time."

This possibility gave Burnett fresh energy, and striding on in front of me he made short work of the distance between us and home, though he many times stumbled and many times fell over the rocks in his haste and in the darkness.

When he reached his own door he paused suddenly :

"You go in," he said : "I dare not."

I left him standing outside and opened the door of the sitting-room. The lamp on the table was burning, as Burnett had evidently left it—but the room was empty !

"Go and look upstairs," I said ; "she may have returned and gone to bed."

He darted past me, and I heard him open the bedroom door and strike a light. The dead silence which ensued told me that his wife was not there. I followed him and found him lying on the bed, his face buried in his hands, in one breath muttering curses on the disused shaft and in the next breathing her name with a tenderness which I longed for her to hear, for I never thought she had known how dearly he loved her.

"This is no time for inaction," I said ; "you must not give way, old fellow ! I am just going over to the cottage to—to tell Elsie, and then I will be back in a moment and start out with you again."

He consented to come down to the sitting-room, and there I left him whilst I hurried across to my wife. She was, as I expected, awaiting me in intense anxiety, and in a few hasty words I told her the result of our fruitless search.

She did not seek to detain me :

"God grant you may do better this time," she said as, standing on the doorstep, she watched me disappear into the darkness.

How *old* Burnett looked when I returned to him—old and haggard and worn as by some long illness ! It was now past two in the morning, and he seemed so unnerved that I poured him out a strong dose of brandy to give him courage for another search, and helped myself to the same. Whilst we were drinking it, I heard a sound—as of the click of the garden gate. We both started to our feet—Wentworth turning ashy white and grasping the table for support. Surely those were *her* light quick footsteps on the gravel path ? Still we were motionless, our very breathing seemed to pause. Then the sitting-room door was opened, and Letty, radiant and joyous and proud, burst into the room, exclaiming at the sight of our tumblers :

"So you are making a night of it too !" And with these words she gave a mighty heave and managed to throw on to the table—a tresh caught 4-lb. sewyn !

"There ! what do you think of that ?" she said, gazing at the fish's shiny scales with a delight which I could not help admiring in the midst of my revulsed and confused emotions.

I do not think her husband saw the fish at all, for his eyes brimmed over with tears at the sight of his lost wife ; and I hurriedly left the room and closed the door—they were best alone, those two !

What explanation took place between them I never knew, but the next day Letty was as proud as ever of her sewyn, and gave my wife

a long account of how she captured it. She said she felt determined to catch something, in spite of Wentworth's objections ; and with that idea in her mind, she left the rest of us and returned to the house to fetch one of her husband's rods, and then proceeded with it to the river. But being anxious to avoid Wentworth, she had gone up instead of down stream—private water which, by the bye, she had no manner of right to fish ! She was an intensely determined girl, and she had made up her mind to stay out all night rather than return empty-handed, and it was only because she had managed, with that strange luck which often attends the unskilled, to catch the sewyn when she did that she came back at 2 a.m. lugging her trophy with her ! To do Mrs. Burnett justice, it should be stated that the idea of her husband's being anxious about her had never crossed her girlish mind ; the whole thing had been to her a joke and nothing more.

And to do both husband and wife justice, and, moreover, to bring my tale to a conclusion with a strictly moral finale, I must add that from that night forward Mr. and Mrs. Burnett's married life was, I believe, as happy as my own—I cannot say more.



SILVER WINGS.

Float, float, in sunset hush,
Under the crimson sky,
Float, float, the sunset flush
Deepens, to fade and die—
Then in the day's last golden smile,
Float, O swan, to some fairy isle,
Close in the sedge to lie,
Bird of the silver wings, under the stars and the moon.

Flute-like notes, sad and slow,
Over the waters stray,
Hark ! the swan, soft and low,
Surgeth his life away.
Swan, O swan, is thy nest not near ?
Silver wings on the silver mere
Fold for ever and aye,
Under the starlit sky—under the stars and the moon.

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

THE RESCUE AT THE LEBOMBO.

BY LT.-COLONEL MAHONY, C.M.G.

TOWARDS the closing days of January, 1879, a wild panic reigned in the town of Pietermaritzburg; the news of the disaster at Isandhlwana had spread dismay among all classes, and an immediate descent upon the colony by Cetewayo and his Zulu braves was fully expected.

The streets were alive with soldiers and civilians, all armed to the teeth; busy workmen ran hither and thither, hurriedly engaged in erecting loopholed barricades across the several entrances to the town; and all the larger stores and places of business, together with the whole of the public buildings, were being put into a state of defence. Laagers sprang up at certain strategical points, to which all the inhabitants were to repair upon a given signal from Fort Napier; that stronghold itself, perched on the top of the hill overlooking the country side, being impregnable, as far as any force that could be brought against it by the Zulu king was concerned.

On the stoop of an unpretending little boarding house, situated midway between the fort and the road leading to Durban, three men, in the rough, serviceable costume of the officers of the Natal Native Contingent—high boots, slouched hat, cord jacket, and bandolier across the shoulder—were assembled in conversation; one, a tall, dark man, who appeared to be the principal, was listening to some communication from a staff officer who had just ridden up.

“The General says you are not to advance until the other two regiments are ready, and in the meantime he wishes you to encamp your men on the glacis outside the fort.”

“That will be a great waste of time,” remarked the person addressed. “I could push on by Grey Town and seize the hill commanding the drift, making the advance of the Zulus in that direction, at all events, impossible.”

“The General thinks you would be hardly strong enough to hold them in check with one regiment alone, whereas if you wait a day or two you will have nearly three thousand men, and with Russell’s battery you will be able to take the offensive yourself, should occasion demand it.”

“Well, of course General Clifford’s orders must be carried out, but I certainly regret the delay.”

“Then I can’t say I do,” said one of the others, a fair-haired boyish-looking young man, laughing. “I daresay the place will keep for a bit, and I shall be able to go to the Daneleighs’ ball, which they insist upon carrying out, notwithstanding the commotion, and I think they are right, for it is very doubtful if Cetewayo will come to

close quarters here, and the alarm is all due to the governor's needless apprehension."

"Yes," said the third man, who had not yet spoken, a square-built, jewish-looking individual, of middle age: "I agree with you there. Did you hear that on the first rumour he transferred his plate, jewels and other valuables from Government House to the gaol, as the strongest building about, and intends going there himself should we come to blows with the great unkose?"

"Bravo! old sixty per cent.," laughed out the second man. "You've got an eye to the main chance. The spirit of the tribes is not dead in you, my boy, though you *have* taken to fighting instead of fingering the coin; the possible loot of the jewels has fetched you."

"Never mind, young fellow," replied the other good-humouredly; "I'll try and do a little of both before I have done, and perhaps may be able to put you up to a good thing besides, if you behave yourself."

"Thanks, old man, don't deny yourself the pleasure; it will be gratefully accepted by yours truly."

Major Cheriton, the senior officer, belonged to the regular army, and was in command of a battalion of the Natal Native Contingent, called up as auxiliaries to the force about to be opposed to the Zulus, it being further intended, when the full number of three regiments had been raised, to confer upon him the command of the whole.

The second man was Victor Yorke, a young fellow holding a commission in a militia regiment at home, who had come out from England for "the fun of the thing," as he said, and with a hope to see a little real service.

Benjamin Alexander, the third man, was a Jew, and held the position of Quartermaster; an odd character in his way, and one rarely, if ever, met with. He came out to Natal for the purpose of trading in diamonds, having a thorough knowledge of the value and quality of precious stones; but he also longed to couple a little combatant work with the main object of his visit, being, besides, a really good, kind-hearted fellow; and Major Cheriton found in him, from his shrewd business habits, the very man for the post to which he had been appointed.

A large house standing on the left bank of the River Umsindusi, which runs to the westward of the town, was the residence of Mr. Daneleigh, an officer in the service of the Natal Government; he was married and had one daughter, a fair-haired, charming girl of twenty. In such a place as Maritzburg there was no lack of admirers, and the lovely Agnes Daneleigh had scores of worshippers. But she continued fancy free until the appearance of Victor Yorke, who had arrived in the place about six months previously, and was a constant and welcome visitor at the house. His gay, winning manner, with the true amiability of his character, raised him up a

host of friends, and he was not long in finding favour in the eyes of the young lady.

On the evening of the day following the conversation mentioned as having taken place at the boarding-house, Miss Daneleigh was loitering with a mallet in her hand on the lawn in front of the house, as if waiting to begin a game of croquet, though neither hoops nor balls had been removed from the oblong box under the shade of the lofty syringa tree overshadowing the grassy space. She had an air of expectation, and looked occasionally down the long avenue that led in from Loop Street. Presently the barking of a dog announced the approach of a visitor, and in a short time Victor Yorke made his appearance. After a silent greeting, words evidently not being needed, they wandered down a side alley, overhung with orange trees, leading to the river, where the thickly-clustering foliage screened them from observation.

"Oh ! Victor," the young lady began, "I have been so very miserable, and scarcely slept last night. I thought all manner of dreadful things. Since the time I heard you were going to the front I have known no rest. Mr. Shepstone says the Zulus will be joined by the Amatongas, and the troops under Major Cheriton will be too weak to stop their advance, should they come by the Kranz Kop drift."

"My darling, don't be alarmed ; our chief is a magnificent fellow, and full of resource ; his only fear is that they won't come near enough to let us have a slap at them. He intends to run up a fort on the Kranz which will command all the country around, and enable him to descend in time to meet anything that can be brought against us at that place. Of course the enemy could get into the colony by some mountain path with which we are unacquainted ; but no large force could penetrate by that means, and the inroad could only be made, if at all, for the purpose of plunder. However, he anticipates no danger, as the latest accounts say that the fighting regiments have gone back to their kraals ; and his only excitement, he imagines, will be to get you all down to Grey Town, and so up to our proposed fort for a pic-nic."

"You make me so happy, dear Victor," the girl replied ; "for I was indeed very wretched ; my mind filled with the most dismal forebodings, always thinking of that horrible Isandhlwana. Mr. Alexander has been here, and spoke so hopefully about your expedition, quite raising my spirits. The kind fellow gave me this," she said, producing a small gold shell, at the end of which hung a small pearl.

"Moses is a good fellow, certainly," said her lover ; "and a first rate specimen of a Hebrew, with lots of pluck and go in him."

They lingered some time longer amidst the perfume-laden air, and then Victor took his departure, to appear later on at the ball. Mr. Daneleigh expressed his determination to hold, notwithstanding the excitement ; for he contended that no native leader would make

up his mind to attack a place where the inhabitants were all prepared, and ready to make a stout resistance, a circumstance he would learn from his spies.

The ball came off in due course, and was a great success. Two days later Major Cheriton and his party were on the road to Kranz Kop.

On his arrival he lost no time in placing everything in a satisfactory state, both as regards attack or defence. The troops were set to scarp the front of the rock facing the drift, and a battery of two guns was erected so as to command the road leading from Zululand. Then, pitching their tents on the square summit of the hill, he surrounded it with a wall built up with large stones (of which there were abundance), cemented with daub, a viscous mud obtained from the river banks, having loopholes at intervals for musketry.

Feeling then pretty secure, arrangements were made to send out patrols at stated intervals in order to search the country around, after which they betook themselves to their tents for a spell of rest.

Things remaining perfectly quiet at Pietermaritzburg, as well as in the neighbourhood of the outlying towns more exposed to attack, the state of tension became somewhat relaxed; and further to relieve their apprehension, it was reported that Dabulamanzi had returned to the king's kraal. So at length, as time sped on, and the enemy making no sign, all fear of attack began gradually to die out, and the most timid ceased to feel anxiety.

Several visits had been paid by officials and others to the position occupied by Major Cheriton, and the post was becoming a sort of pleasure resort for the friends of the officers, in some such way as had been predicted by the Commandant. This emboldened young Yorke to prefer a request to his superior that an invitation be sent to the Daneleighs at Pietermaritzburg; he engaging to obtain a house for their occupation at Grey Town, from whence they could drive the ten miles intervening between that place and their fortalice.

To this there appeared to be no objection, and in due course the family arrived at Grey Town, and a day was fixed upon for a visit to the Kop.

Major Cheriton, notwithstanding the general feeling of security, did not omit to send out the usual patrols, for, as he said, after the experience of Isandhlwana there was no knowing how stealthily and quietly a force of natives could be concentrated.

In expectation of the arrival of their friends, some little pains had been taken to set out their warlike surroundings with such small luxuries as their isolated position could command, and with this view (on behalf of the ladies) Mr. Alexander had ridden out early in the morning to a distant kraal, where he hoped to obtain a supply of milk, a delicacy that had hitherto been denied them.

About the time the visitors were expected a sentry called attention

to a horseman riding furiously down a steep, stony road, or rather water-course which ran along the side of a mountain about a mile to the left of their position.

"He seems in a deuce of a hurry," remarked one of the officers; "it looks as if his horse had bolted."

"No, I think not," observed another; "see how he reels. It appears more like a case of too much boers" (native brandy).

The Commandant, here coming forward, adjusted his glasses, and after a brief survey he exclaimed: "Why, it's Alexander, and I fear he is wounded." Then suddenly turning to the guard, he called out: "Stand to your arms!—Bugler! sound the 'Fall in.' See," he continued: "there's a body of Zulus at the head of the Kloof. How did they manage to slip through? It could only have been by the Umsinga—but I thought Baker was there."

In a few moments all were on the alert in the camp, and a party one hundred strong with two officers marched rapidly in the direction of the wounded officer. The Zulus continued their course down the ravine and were evidently gaining on the fugitive, when the relieving party emerged from the swampy overgrowth at the base of the mountain, and, throwing out skirmishers, opened fire, and with telling effect, as several of the pursuers were seen to fall. This arrested their progress, and after a short consultation they withdrew quickly by the way they had come.

In the meantime Mr. Alexander pushed on, though evidently in much distress, and by the time he came up with the advancing party, was unable to keep his saddle, rolling heavily to the ground. Applying some brandy to his lips from a flask carried by one of the officers, they in a short time brought him round, and he was enabled to gasp out: "The Daneleighs have been captured by a party under Dabulamanzi. I recognised the chief, having seen him once before across the Tugela, at Fort Pearson. I fear he will take them to his kraal. I was hurt in trying to help them. Send all the force you can spare by the river, and intercept them at the Lebombo. I—I—" here he fainted from loss of blood.

One of the officers rode back to the fort on the wounded man's horse, while the others improvised a stretcher with rifles and some of the long, sedgy marsh grass from the lands about, secured with slings, and followed as quickly as possible.

By the time they had arrived, Major Cheriton had placed himself at the head of a rescue party, of which Victor Yorke formed one. The state of mind of the young man bordered on frenzy, and it was only by the Commandant sternly threatening to leave him behind that he could be brought into the requisite degree of calmness necessary for the performance of his duty. After they had once started, however, he assumed a stern, dogged demeanour, silently pursuing his way at the head of his company.

Their success depended upon reaching in time a turn of the river

where a large flat-topped rock rose in the centre of the stream, and which was accessible only from the bank they were on, as a deep, swift current ran upon the opposite side. This in their possession would give them the command of both banks ; in addition to which a detour to the left brought them to a streamlet called the Lebombo, which had its rise in the mountain of that name, where, amid the dense undergrowth that bordered it, a large body of men could be concealed. Thus the enemy passing down the slope of the mountain could be assailed both in front and on the flank. There was, of course, the consideration of injury to their captive friends, but as Zulu warriors always advance in front of their prisoners or any plunder they may have secured, leaving a guard in charge, it was decided the risk might be safely run. In order to minimise the danger as much as possible, a select band of native scouts under Victor Yorke was detailed to proceed by a circuitous route, in order to cut off the prisoners and their escort when the main body was attacked.

The party of braves, not dreaming of being molested, came gaily along, and as they debouched from the pass that led to the river, their shields thrown forward and assegais erect, they went streaming along the side of the Lebombo ; being allowed to pass well onward before a sign was made. But as the head of the column reached the margin of the water, preparatory to crossing, a deadly fire was opened upon them from the position on the rock, promptly supplemented by the men concealed among the sedges inland.

Though taken by surprise, the Zulus rushed upon their foes in the most courageous manner, climbing the slippery rock, and fighting resolutely hand to hand. For some time the result appeared doubtful, but the superior arms of the Colonials at length prevailed, and the enemy began to drop off by twos and threes, swimming to the opposite bank, and sullenly making their way to their own country. The party on the Lebombo suffered considerable loss, for the Zulus, boldly rushing into the narrow stream, attacked in turn, slaying more than half the number opposed to them ; but Major Cheriton, when his hands were free, sent a reinforcement which soon put them to flight, and they scattered through the defiles of the mountain, abandoning the plunder they had collected.

We must now revert to the family at Grey Town.

On the morning when Mr. Alexander had started, on hospitable thoughts intent, Mr. Daneleigh with his wife and daughter set off in a Cape cart for Kranz Kop. He had reached the Inshangani Valley, a sterile, dreary tract, interspersed with dwarf thorns and large boulders, from whence the open country could be reached leading to their destination, and had nearly passed through to the more fertile slopes beyond, when a party of natives, fully armed, barred their way.

"What's the meaning of this?" said Mr. Daneleigh, springing from the cart and advancing towards their leader, who was distinguished

by a row of tiger's claws round his neck, and a bunch of feathers struck through his keshla.

"Go back, white chief," was the reply. "I take the Intombi (young girl) to my kraal. I am Dabulamanzu of the Amazulus; she will be Inkosi Kass" (chieftainess).

"You black scoundrel," said Mr. Daneleigh, furiously rushing towards him and aiming a blow with a sjambok he held in his hand; but before it could reach an assegai was hurled from the rear which struck him in the shoulder, and he fell to the ground covered with blood. At this the shrieks of the women rang wildly out, and the chief with half-a-dozen of his followers surrounded the cart. At that moment a mounted man appeared on the ridge of the hill, and seeming at once to take in the situation, drew a revolver and fired rapidly at the group about the cart, who were now engaged in dragging forth the ladies.

The Zulus turned at once towards the new-comer and a shower of assegais flew round him, one catching him on the arm, another in the side and a third grazing the shoulder, tearing away the flesh and inflicting a nasty wound. Finding he would be unable to cope with the odds against him, he turned his horse's head in the direction of Kranz Kop and rode swiftly away, followed hotly by a dozen stalwart warriors detached by the chief.

Leaving Mrs. Daneleigh with her wounded husband, Dabulamanzu forced the young lady, in spite of her resistance, upon one of the horses (having previously cut the traces of the cart) and mounted the other himself. He then proceeded to gather his followers together, the main body of whom were close at hand, and, with the plunder they had possessed themselves of, struck off through the mountains in order to effect a crossing into Zululand.

He occasionally addressed the weeping and terrified girl, telling her she was now his wife—would be Queen of the Amazulus—and own cattle that could not be counted on the wide veldt.

As they approached the opening in the hills that led downwards to the shore, a sound of firing reached them, and the party closed up; Dabulamanzu riding to the front, leaving Miss Daneleigh in charge of two of his men.

Moving cautiously forward, they reached a part of the descent where a deepish drop confronted them. To the right of this ran a donga, and on a level space hard by, a small kraal, with a field of mealies in full growth.

As the party began to drop one by one into the road below, suddenly, from the kraal, mealie field and donga, came a trail of bullets that brought a score of the raiders to the ground; the chief among the rest, his horse being shot dead. The attacking party was that despatched under Victor Yorke, who now, with his men, emerged from their cover, and delivered a second volley, completely routing the enemy, who fled in all directions.

Loud shrieks and calls for help were now heard above them, and young Yorke, followed by several of his men, dashed up the steep way. On arriving at the top they saw two Zulus engaged in urging forward a horse upon which a lady was held, who appeared too exhausted to offer anything but a faint resistance.

Victor, recognising Miss Daneleigh, bounded on in front of his men, just missing an assegai flung at him, through fortunately tripping over an ant heap; regaining his feet, he fired his revolver at the horse, the shot striking him in the leg, which brought the poor animal to a standstill. By this time the others of the party had come up, and the two men left in charge, seeing it was now impossible to carry off their captive, bolted into the waste of bush around, leaving the lady in a fainting condition on the horse, from which she fell insensible into the arms of her lover. On being restored to consciousness she told them of her father and mother, upon which they went on to the Inshangani valley, where they found the unhappy couple wild with distress on account of their daughter. The delight experienced on hearing of her safety can well be imagined.

Mr. Daneleigh's wound turned out not to be serious, and he was enabled to return to Grey Town with his wife and daughter in a fresh trap that had been procured from that place.

Dabulamanzi, it appeared, was only wounded, and managed to make good his escape; subsequently rejoining Cetewayo, in time to take part in the battle of Ulundi, where the finishing stroke was put to the Zulu power.

After Sir Garnet Wolseley's settlement, the native contingent was dismissed to their homes, and the post of Kranz Kop dismantled, as the neighbourhood of Grey Town had now become as safe as Pall Mall.

The brave Hebrew, Alexander, recovered from his injuries, and later on did well as a diamond merchant at Kimberley, returning to England in a few years a fairly rich man.

In due course Victor Yorke and Agnes Daneleigh were married, and he carried her away to his English home.

The brave Cheriton went to Egypt, and after doing good and gallant service, was killed at the head of his regiment, to the deep regret of all who knew him.

Dabulamanzi, the great Lukanani, or war Captain, is now a (more or less) peaceful citizen, being occasionally seen on one of the frontier posts, arrayed in a tall hat and a pea jacket, attended by a choice band of his Indunas, affectionately hugging a bottle of Boer brandy, for each of which articles, both of apparel and refreshment, he had paid a sovereign at the local store, such a thing as change not coming within his notice: the coins, no doubt, being a portion of the loot at Isandhlwana.

THE CONVENT GARDEN.

I.

CLOSE sheltered from the gaze of all
 It lay, the lovely garden—
 The long, the lofty convent wall
 Its beauty's jealous warden.
 And flower-like shadows fell, to rest
 On the nun's pale brow and her pensive breast.

The sunlight rippled amid the trees,
 In webs of misty gold,
 The nectarous lily fed the bees
 That murmured in its fold.
 But sunshine and sweetness load like sorrow
 The heart that weeteth not hope's gay morrow.

Without, where reeds and wild flowers dream
 And tangled trailers run,
 A little sea-ward flowing stream
 Laughed up into the sun,
 And the birds' free note, with a rapture of sound,
 Seemed to shiver and darken the walls around.

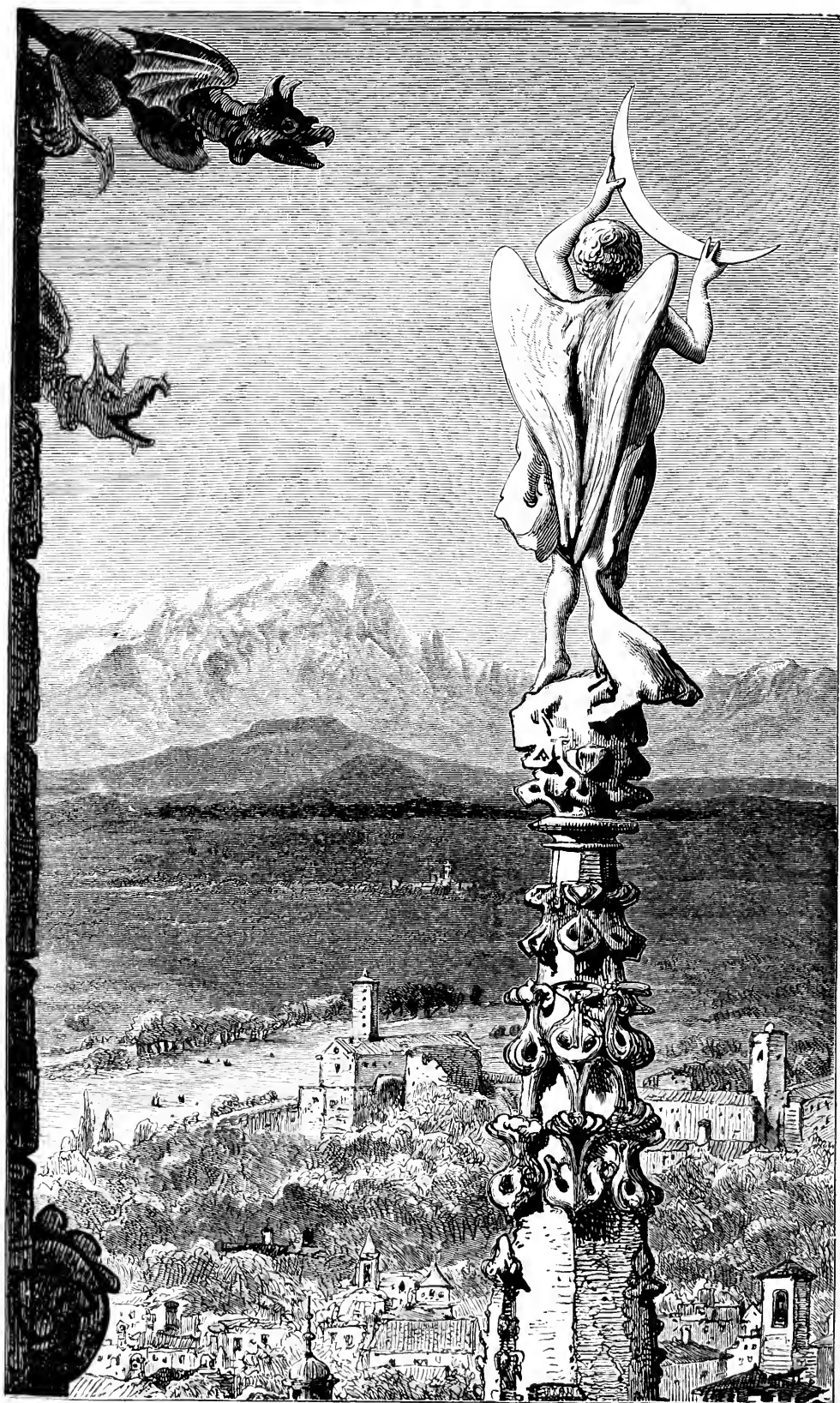
II.

The star of evening glimmer'd pale,
 And pealed the vesper chimes,
 A light wind fluttered her dusky veil,
 As under the perfumed limes
 She passed to the chapel, where, still and deep,
 The life of an earlier age doth sleep.

Stained crystal and tapers fair
 Make dim the twilight skies,
 On wings of the angels sculptured there
 Rich rainbow lustre lies—
 But no rich blending colours the life
 Of a human soul with itself at strife.

Up floating through carven arches dim
 The sweet, clear octaves roll,
 "Dies ille iræ" flows the hymn
 For the departed soul—
 But her voice, by my wistful fancy fed,
 Seemed to plead for the living and not for the dead!

C. M. GEMMER.



FROM THE HEIGHTS OF MILAN CATHEDRAL.

"IN SUNNY CLIMES."

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR KATHERINE."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAPTAIN RALEIGH CHANGES HIS PLANS.

CAPTAIN RALEIGH left Calais on Thursday afternoon, and reached Brindisi on Saturday evening. The P. and O. steamer did not leave till Monday, so he had to spend Sunday in Brindisi. He went to Mass at eight on Sunday morning, and then returned to his hotel and ordered his breakfast and some English papers.

He turned over the papers languidly, taking but little interest in their contents, as he drank his coffee and ate his roll. He was too full of his own sorrow and disappointment to care much about what went on in the world; he was in the mood to hate the world and its pomps and vanities, and to long for solitude. He wanted to be alone with his sorrow; and since Vera had become a nun, he was half inclined to resign his commission and become a priest. In fact, his thoughts were all running in this direction as he glanced through the summary of news in the papers the waiter had laid by his side.

He had dimly realised at church that morning that there is something in the world higher and better than even the happiness of married love: that something is, the joy which comes from resignation to God's will, even when that will runs most counter to our own will. The clouds had seemed to open for a moment as he knelt before the altar, and showed him that behind them blazed the sun; but he only glimpsed it. Perhaps we never do much more than glimpse this joy on earth; for it is a joy which transcends mere earthly happiness as the sun eclipses the electric light; it is a foretaste of the joy of heaven; but as heaven cannot be entered till we have borne the cross, neither can this joy be even tasted without keen suffering. That suffering Arthur Raleigh had endured since he caught sight of Vera at the Calais railway station.

Suddenly the few people who were in the coffee-room, who had

been watching this pale, handsome, languid, somewhat melancholy-looking Englishman breakfasting an hour earlier than his countrymen usually do, were amazed to see him spring to his feet, his dark, sleepy eyes flashing with joy, his whole aspect changed from quiet indifference to energetic action, as he called the waiter and sent for a railway guide and his servant.

"McCarthy, find out when the next train starts for Paris. I am going back to England as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sir," answered McCarthy, with true military discipline, though privately of opinion that his master must be out of his mind to rush backwards and forwards from Paris to Brindisi in this style.

"Have you breakfasted?" added the Captain quickly.

"Yes, sir. Beg pardon, sir, but are we going to spend all our leave travelling from Brindisi to Calais and back?" said McCarthy, human nature asserting itself in spite of military discipline.

"No, my good McCarthy, no; but the truth is, I had some very bad news the night we reached Calais, and I have just found out it was not true; so I am going to England after all. But you shall stay here and rest for a few days, and then come after me; I can manage without you."

"No, sir, thank you; I would rather go with you; and so long as you have had good news, I don't mind where we go."

The cause of this sudden change in Captain Raleigh's plans was the following paragraph which he had just read in one of the morning papers, headed—

"Jewel Robbery at Woodford Rectory.—The Rectory of Woodford was broken into on Tuesday night, and the diamonds of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, wife of Archdeacon Tempest, rector of the parish, stolen. The affair has caused much excitement; for Miss Ryot-Tempest, daughter of the Archdeacon, has mysteriously disappeared and a summons for her arrest on a charge of maliciously wounding a groom named Mark Brown on the night of the robbery has been issued. We understand a cross-summons will be taken out by the Archdeacon against this same Mark Brown for perjury. The whole affair seems involved in mystery. Meanwhile, two facts appear indisputable: the young lady, who, we understand, is beautiful, has disappeared, and the diamonds are missing. The case will be brought before the local magistrates on Tuesday next, when heavy bail for Miss Tempest's appearance will be paid into court."

On reading this, Captain Raleigh's first thought was, Vera is no novice; his next, she has run away in the disguise of a nun, or perhaps has been sent away by her father, till this foul plot has been unravelled; his last thought, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest is at the bottom of the mystery. His final resolution, the mystery should be sifted to the very bottom, even if it exposed the treachery of this woman: his future wife should not be persecuted in this way with impunity.

He had just made this resolution when McCarthy, who had gone to make inquiries about the trains, returned to say there was a train leaving for Paris in half-an-hour, and if they hurried they could just catch it. No need to suggest to Raleigh to hurry. He sent for his bill and they caught the train; but before they reached Paris he had decided to go across by St. Malo and Southampton, instead of by Calais and Dover, in order that he might go to Avranches and see Father Ambrose. He knew that he had been in constant correspondence with Vera for some months, and perhaps could tell where she now was.

At any rate, it was worth the delay, as the old priest might have some valuable advice to offer; and now that Raleigh's joy at finding Vera was still free to be his wife had somewhat cooled, he began to realise she was nevertheless in a very awkward position, though he was as certain of her innocence as of his own.

They reached Avranches late on Tuesday evening; but Captain Raleigh was so worn out with so much railway travelling, to say nothing of the suspense and anxiety he was enduring, that he went straight to bed and slept till nine the next morning.

After breakfast on the following day he went to call on Father Ambrose, and, to his great disappointment, found the good priest was not at home; but the old French servant remembered Captain Raleigh well, and from her he learnt that her master was gone to England; to Woodford.

"He went off suddenly, sir, last Monday. There was a young English nun came to see him on Thursday, and he went off on Monday. I don't know, but I fancy she had something to do with his going."

"A young English nun, was there? What was she like?" asked Raleigh, who had no doubt this was Vera.

"Beautiful, sir, and very like that pretty English Catholic lady who died here about two years ago."

"Has she gone to England with the father?"

"I can't say, sir; she may have gone, but I believe she is in this convent here; she was a Dominican."

Raleigh's heart beat with joy at hearing this; Vera probably so close to him; clearly she had come over in disguise, perhaps fearing bail should be refused. Surely under the circumstances he would be justified in breaking his promise to her father and going to the convent to see her!

It was a sore temptation, and Raleigh spent the morning on a seat in the botanical gardens, gazing on that lovely view of Mont S. Michel without seeing it, wrestling with the temptation before he decided that his conscience would not allow him to yield to it. In another fortnight he would be absolved from his promise, for Vera would be twenty-one. He would not break it now, though only a few steps divided him from his love. Having thus decided, he com-

forted himself with the reflection that perhaps Vera was not in the convent after all ; perhaps she had gone to Woodford with Father Ambrose ; in any case he had better go there himself as quickly as he could. Accordingly he crossed that night to Southampton, and went down the next day to Woodford ; but if he hoped to find Vera there he was disappointed.

We left that young lady kneeling in Father Ambrose's confessional, having just informed him with a trembling voice who she was.

Father Ambrose had been somewhat surprised when told that a Dominican nun, apparently English, wanted him ; for the Dominicans at Avranches were enclosed and had their own confessor. However, he supposed this must be some nun of the Third Order, travelling ; nevertheless, when he found there was no one else in the church, he was still more surprised, as nuns do not usually go about alone ; and his surprise was complete when the kneeling figure raised her veiled head and whispered, "I am Vera Tempest."

The old priest started at the voice, at once so familiar and so unexpected, and, turning his head, saw Vera's face shrouded in the veil and guimpe of a Dominican nun.

"My child, what is the meaning of this ? Why are you here in this dress ?" asked the puzzled confessor.

Vera's tongue was now loosened, and she poured out her story in a voice trembling with indignation at her step-mother's outrageous conduct, and at Mark Brown's impudent accusation, occasionally dashing away some hot, angry tears which the recital of her own woes drew from her ; for, as Schopenhauer says, the source of tears is self-pity.

"My dear child, you have been cruelly treated. I am grieved indeed to hear of it, but you must go back to your father at once ; he will be terribly anxious about you," said Father Ambrose when she had finished.

"I can't, father ; I won't go back ; you must take care of me till Captain Raleigh arrives from India. I know you will for my mother's sake, and you will keep my secret ; that is why I have told you all about it under the seal of confession. You can't tell papa where I am unless I consent, can you ?" said Vera in a coaxing tone.

"No, but you will consent, won't you ? I'll go back with you myself as soon as you have rested. I am sure it is the only thing to be done."

"No, father, I will not go home to be prosecuted for a crime I could not possibly have committed. You will take care of me, and you will keep my secret," persisted Vera ; "and I am dreadfully hungry and thirsty ; you must give me some food, please," she added in a plaintive tone, which she rightly guessed would move Father Ambrose's kind heart.

He said at last :

"Well, I will keep your secret, so come into my house, and you

shall have some tea while I consider where you are to go." And the perplexed priest left the confessional and led Vera into his house through the sacristy.

She was dreadfully tired with her long journey and the excitement she had been through, and she threw herself into the easy-chair. Father Ambrose drew forward with a very un-nunlike air of fatigue.

"Did you travel all this way alone, Vera?" asked Father Ambrose, glancing at the beautiful face and graceful, lissome figure, whose loveliness even the loose habit could not hide.

"Two other nuns took care of me from Dover to Paris, and I think they suspected I was not a genuine nun, for I did not tell my beads or say an office as they both did. Father Ambrose, I know what you can do with me; I have just thought of it; put me into the convent here, and let the nuns take care of me. I'll be very good, and do everything they tell me; and you can go to Woodford and find out when it will be safe for me to go home; and you may tell papa you know where I am, but you won't say I am here, will you?" and Vera sat up and looked appealingly into the priest's face.

"I had thought of that," he replied slowly, "but I am not sure that I can persuade the Mother-Prioress to consent. I shall have to tell her you are not a nun, but you need not be afraid; she is quite safe. While you are getting your tea I'll go and see her, and try what I can do; my old French servant will look after you whilst I am gone."

And after a little more conversation Father Ambrose went to the convent, while his French servant waited on Vera and thought she had never seen such a beautiful creature as this young English nun. When Father Ambrose returned, Vera had removed her hood and cap and was sound asleep in his easy-chair, her pretty golden hair tumbling about her face. He was loth to disturb her, but fear lest the servant should come in and discover by her long hair that his visitor was no nun obliged him to wake her.

"You naughty girl. Put on your hood again and hide up that golden hair, or Marie will guess you are an impostor," he said with an amused twinkle in his eyes. "I have seen the Mother-Prioress, and she will take care of you as long as it is necessary; she knows who you are, but no one else will know anything about you. You must not wear the habit——"

"But I have no other clothes," interrupted Vera.

"So I told the Mother-Prioress, but she has arranged that; she will let us in herself while the rest of the community are at compline, and rig you out as best she can till you can get what you want."

"But won't the other nuns wonder who I am?"

"They will think you are a lady-boarder. They frequently have ladies staying in the house, and they will ask no questions, so you need not be afraid. Besides, you know they are enclosed; so they

cannot go outside the cloisters to gossip about you, and you will not be able to go out either, for you can't walk about alone in France, therefore I am afraid you will find it rather dull."

"I shan't mind that; it will only be for three weeks at the outside. Someone will come and fetch me then," said Vera archly.

Half-an-hour later he and Vera drove to the convent, where they were admitted by the Prioress.

About the same time Captain Raleigh was leaving Paris by the express for Brindisi on his way to India; though, as we know, his plans were modified.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TURNING THE TABLES.

THE blacksmith was a total abstainer; Mrs. Canter was not: she obeyed the apostolic counsel to Timothy, and took a little wine for her stomach's sake; or rather for her customers' benefit, since she was of opinion that a little stimulant improved the quality of her washing. Like most teetotallers, Reuben made up for his abstinence from beer by indulging largely in tea; his tea was his favourite meal, and when Mrs. Canter returned from the Rectory, after her interviews with the Archdeacon and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, she found her brother anxiously looking out for her, impatient to make the tea, which he always did himself.

"Well, Reuben, it is lucky I came here," said Mrs. Canter as she proceeded to cut bread-and-butter for her boys. "I have heard the whole story just as Miss Vera told it to the Archdeacon, and, fortunately, I can prove it is true."

Here Mrs. Canter recounted Vera's version of what had occurred on the night of the robbery, while Reuben listened attentively as he sipped his tea, his face growing very grave when he heard of Vera's somnambulism.

"She has walked in her sleep ever since she was a child, but Mrs. Ryot-Tempest won't believe me: I don't know that the magistrates will either, for there is no one else in England to prove it. Mr. Rex knows it; luckily I told him before he went away, and he is telegraphed for, but he can't be here for nearly a fortnight, and it is more important to prove she has walked in her sleep than to catch that man you suspect, for I don't believe he has the diamonds."

Reuben said nothing. He knew there was one other person in England who could prove Vera walked in her sleep, but to do so would oblige him to confess the action of his life of which he was most ashamed; if he gave evidence of having on one occasion saved Vera's life when she was walking in her sleep, he would be asked what he was doing at such an hour at such a place, and then what a confession he would have to make!

What a scandal it would create if he, the most respected man in the village, the most devout member of his sect in Woodford, admired by the rich and honoured by the poor—if he were to confess that he had once been tempted to commit murder, and had very nearly yielded to the temptation!

No, not even to save Vera could he do this.

"The next magistrates' meeting is on Tuesday, and the case comes on then. I must come over and give evidence, but how I wish there was someone else to back me up," continued Mrs. Canter.

Still Reuben said nothing; he could back her up strongly enough if he chose, but he did not choose.

"By-the-bye, Reuben, I forgot to tell you Mark Brown is going to swear he saw you and Miss Vera down by the canal in the middle of the night."

"When?" exclaimed the blacksmith, starting to his feet in amazement.

"About a week ago."

"It is false," said Reuben, briefly resuming his seat, much relieved to find Mark did not propose swearing he had seen him on that terrible night.

"Of course it is. You don't expect the truth from Mark Brown, do you? You might as well expect silence from a woman or patience from a sick man. He is trying to make out you helped Miss Vera to steal the diamonds, to pay you out because Janet married Mr. Rex. For my part, as I said before, I don't believe the diamonds are stolen at all."

"Where are they then?"

"Ah! that is the question, and it is one I am not going to answer till I am sure I know. Let us take a turn in the garden before I go up to the Rectory again," replied Mrs. Canter, apparently not desirous of pursuing the subject any further.

"Your garden looks well, Reuben," she said, approvingly, as she followed Reuben round the neat borders, where some wall-flowers, primroses, daffodils, hepaticas and violets were already in bloom.

Mrs. Canter, like all true philosophers, was in advance of her age. Had she been educated she would have been a remarkable woman, and no doubt would have contributed some valuable ideas to modern thought; but she was a born philosopher, destined by circumstances to pursue the humble calling of a laundress. Nevertheless the philosophical element in her composition occasionally caused her, quite unconsciously, to express opinions held by advanced thinkers of which she had certainly never heard. She was in a philosophical mood this spring evening as she walked round Reuben's garden, when, being relieved for that week from the duties of starching and ironing, she felt at liberty to turn her mind to less important subjects.

"Flowers have more brains than many animals," she remarked

meditatively, quite unaware that a scientific thinker recently endeavoured to prove this. "Tell me a daisy don't know it is modest, or a violet that it is humble and smells sweet, or a poppy that it is showy and poisonous, or a tulip that it is gaudy and brazen-faced, or a rose that it is beautiful and everyone loves it ; law bless me, the rose knows it as well as a pretty girl knows she is pretty. Flowers aren't the senseless things folk think them."

"I don't think they have brains," said Reuben, smiling.

"I do ; and if they have not souls as well as brains they have characters ; there are good and bad characters among the flowers as well as among men and women."

"Which are the good ?"

"The lilies and violets, of course ; they are the saints ; and the poppies and tulips are the sinners, gay, flaunting things, no better than they ought to be. Flowers have their tempers, too, like the rest of us. Some will shut up and sulk if the sun don't shine on them, others will do the same if you gather them, and some will always smile at you no matter what the weather is. There is plenty to be learnt from flowers for those who have the time ; but I must be off. I wish you'd put those children to bed for me, Reuben. I may not be back till late."

Reuben complied, and was glad of the occupation, for it prevented him from having leisure to dwell on what Norah had told him, and he gladly escaped from his own thoughts on this subject for awhile ; though when Mrs. Canter returned, her interview with Mr. Deedes only convinced her more than ever, as she told Reuben, how important it was to find another witness to testify to Vera's somnambulism since Mrs. Ryot-Tempest discredited her.

"Mrs. Ryot-Tempest seems to be nearly as bad as Mark Brown," said Reuben.

"Oh, no, she isn't ; Mark is the worst ; the men always are ; Adam was ever so much worse than Eve, for it only took a woman to tempt him, whereas it took the devil himself to tempt Eve ; and it is the devil that is tempting Mrs. Tempest."

On the following morning, which was Friday, Mrs. Canter returned to Marling with her babies, leaving Reuben alone. On the Saturday afternoon he was sent for by the Archdeacon to see the solicitor, and tell him all he knew about Mark's interviews with Freeman. During this interview the blacksmith again learnt how very important it was to obtain further evidence of Vera's sleep-walking, in order to establish her innocence as well as to convict Mark of perjury, and he returned home very thoughtful.

The blacksmith had been struck with the look of keen suffering on the Archdeacon's face. The poor Rector looked worn, ill, and aged ; the blow to his pride was likely to prove fatal ; his trouble was evidently greater than he could bear ; and Reuben, a proud man himself, deeply sympathised with him, for he knew how terribly

he himself had suffered, when for a few hours he had feared his neighbours had the right to point the finger of scorn at his Janet. Therefore he could form some idea of what the Archdeacon must be suffering when his daughter's character was assailed in this cruel way.

And he, Reuben Foreman, had it in his power to mitigate the Rector's suffering; he was in a position to clear Vera perhaps entirely from the foul charge brought against her; for he could prove that the probability of her defence being true was very great, since his evidence would confirm Mrs. Canter's; and if once it could be established that somnambulism was a habit of Vera's, there would be no reason to doubt that she was walking in her sleep on the night of the robbery. If he could only give his evidence without acknowledging what he was doing that terrible night, then he would go on Tuesday to the police-court and give it, but this was impossible; awkward questions were certain to be asked, and he must answer truly; he dared not risk it.

Reuben sat up thinking over the matter till late that night. At last he went to bed, having decided that much as he wished to help the Archdeacon and Vera in their trouble he could not bring himself to do so.

The next day he went to chapel three times, and felt he was the good Christian everyone thought him; he was certainly one of the elect; he was saved, he was converted, he was forgiven, he deserved the respect he received, and, like the Pharisee in the parable, he thanked God he was not as other men were: he was not like Mark Brown, for instance, of whose final doom there could be no doubt.

Impossible for him to acknowledge he had once been so sorely tempted!

So he decided as he ate his supper. After supper he opened his large Bible and sat down to read. Now he had a habit of opening his Bible by hazard, and taking the text he opened at as what he called "a word" specially meant for him, and having found this "word" he meditated upon it. This was a favourite religious exercise of Reuben's, and he sat down this Sunday evening to practise it. He closed his eyes and turned the book round once or twice, and then slipping his finger inside the leaves, he opened the Bible and found he was pointing to the verse: "Cleanse thou me from my secret faults."

This was the "word" given him that night.

It was so unexpected that it startled him.

In a moment the thought flashed into his mind, Was it possible he was not cleansed from his secret faults? Was that secret sin of his he was so ashamed of still unforgiven?

If so, and he died that night, what would become of him?

Was it possible that God demanded reparation for some sins?

Was He asking this reparation of him now?

Had the still small voice Reuben had been striving to silence for

the last few days been right when it suggested his duty was to clear Vera regardless of the consequences to himself?

The theology of his sect taught the comfortable doctrine that on conversion, all sins, past, present and future, are blotted out; if so, why did this text seem to be written in letters of gold on a black ground till he could read it as plainly, as he sat with closed eyes, as he had done in the book itself?

The real reason was because he had been staring fixedly at the text and the lamp, and then closed his eyes, and this was an after-image, intensified by the excited state of his feelings; he, however, attributed it to some supernatural cause; it was no doubt a solemn warning sent to him, and pushing back his chair, he fell on his knees and remained for some long time absorbed in prayer.

When he rose hot tears had washed away the burning letters from his eyes, and the grace of God had melted the pride of his heart; the battle had been a severe one, but he had won the victory.

His resolution was taken. His secret fault should be no longer a secret fault; he would acknowledge it publicly. The longing for confession latent in every soul when deeply stirred with the consciousness of sin would no longer be stifled. He had borne the burden of that secret too long; he must cast it out. He would do so on the following Tuesday, and by so doing not only ease his conscience and make reparation to God for his sin, but also help to clear Vera from Mark Brown's infamous charge.

And having thus decided, the blacksmith went to bed and slept as calmly and peacefully as a little child. He was in a subdued mood the next day, and his admonitions to his customers were milder than usual in their character.

On Tuesday he went to the forge in his Sunday clothes, and telling his men he should be absent all the morning, he went to the station to meet Mrs. Canter, and on her arrival announced his intention of accompanying her to the magistrates' meeting.

"Well, I never, Reuben! The idea of you taking a holiday to-day! Bless your curiosity! But there, it is just like a man; I always say men are a thousand times more curious than women, and so they are. If you want to hear any gossip ask a married woman, she is sure to have heard it from her husband."

"But where does the husband hear it from?" asked Reuben.

"Where? From his club, of course. It is my belief the real use of all those grand clubs in London which Mr. Rex once showed me is to satisfy the curiosity of the gentlemen who belong to them. They are all alike, rich and poor, they like to know everything, and what they don't know they invent. Why are you going to the police-court to-day? Because you want to know all about this robbery of course, and you are so curious you can't wait till I come back to tell you."

The blacksmith did not attempt to contradict his sister, nor to defend his sex from her accusation. He knew by experience that to

argue with Mrs. Canter was utterly useless ; like the rest of woman-kind, even if convinced against her will she remained of her own opinion still. So he inquired for the little Canters, and thought how surprised Norah would be when she discovered the reason he had taken a holiday.

The Court was crowded, for the report of the robbery had already appeared in the papers and the excitement in the neighbourhood was very great. The Archdeacon and Captain Tempest, accompanied by Mr. Deedes, who was to conduct the case for Vera, arrived just as Reuben and Mrs. Canter did, and to the surprise of the latter the blacksmith drew the solicitor aside and held a short whispered conversation with him.

The case was opened by Mark Brown's lawyer, a common-looking man, who had the reputation of being a very sharp fellow. He stated that his client had brought an action for maliciously wounding him against Vera Ryot-Tempest, who had absconded ; and as the charge was a criminal one, he should demand that the case was sent for trial.

"I see the Archdeacon in Court. Mr. Archdeacon, where is your daughter ?" asked the presiding magistrate.

"I am unable to answer that question, Mr. Hammond, but I and my brother will find bail for her appearance, should the case be sent for trial. All I know is that she is safe ; she telegraphed from London to me to that effect last Wednesday," replied the Archdeacon, who was painfully nervous.

"Is there no defence then ?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes, sir ; I am in a position, I trust, to refute the charge entirely. I have Miss Tempest's account of what occurred to bring before the Court, and I shall call witnesses to prove that her defence is valid," said Mr. Deedes.

"Let the case for the prosecution proceed then," said Mr. Hammond.

Mark Brown, with his wounded arm in a sling, was now called, and gave his evidence sulkily and surlily, but with a dogged obstinacy that not even the strict cross-examination to which he was subjected by Mr. Deedes could shake.

As Mrs. Canter remarked to Reuben : "He told his lies and he stuck to them."

Mark testified that on the night of the robbery he sat up for his master and mistress, who were out at a party, and that soon after midnight he heard a noise in his master's dressing-room ; knowing that his mistress's diamonds were kept there, he ran upstairs to see what the noise was. Miss Tempest was at home and, as he believed, in bed, as were all the other servants ; but, to his astonishment, on opening the dressing-room door he saw Miss Tempest in her dressing-gown, standing and leaning out of the open window ; she turned round on his entrance and fired at him with a pistol his

master had bought a few days before ; the bullet entered his arm and he fell to the ground, and Miss Tempest ran screaming from the room. He noticed on his entrance that the jewel-case was gone, and he afterwards found the empty case in the garden ; he had no doubt whatever that Miss Tempest had dropped the case containing the jewels out of the window to some accomplice, and he believed that accomplice was Reuben Foreman, the village blacksmith.

On being asked his reason for this belief, he stated he had seen the blacksmith and Miss Tempest down by the canal as late as half past ten o'clock one evening last week—Thursday evening ; and Reuben Foreman was in his master's study with Miss Tempest the greater part of Tuesday evening.

Some of the Rectory servants were then called to prove that the jewel-case was in the dressing-room when they went to bed, and was gone when they were roused by the report of a pistol followed by Miss Tempest's screams in the middle of the night ; but their evidence did not help Mark's case much, for they one and all swore Vera's first words on recovering were, " the diamonds, the diamonds."

This concluded the evidence for the prosecution, and Mr. Deedes rose to represent his absent client, whose statement of what had occurred on the night of the robbery he read, having paved the way for this by saying he should call witnesses to prove that two of Mark Brown's statements, at least, were false. First, he could prove that Reuben Foreman was only ten minutes with Miss Tempest on the night of the robbery, and he should call Reuben himself to prove that the object of that visit was to warn the Archdeacon that Mark Brown had been seen two or three times in company with a notorious thief, who was suspected of having stolen the diamonds ; secondly, he should call Reuben Foreman to prove that he was in his own house at half past ten on the previous Thursday night.

This statement, as it was intended to do, prejudiced the Court against Mark Brown and enlisted their sympathies, already on Vera's side, still more strongly in her favour. This was necessary, for Mr. Deedes was painfully aware that Vera's defence was very weak. Justices of the peace were not likely to have much faith in somnambulism, unless indeed this could be proved to be undoubtedly a habit of Vera's ; but until he came into Court that day, the lawyer had no testimony to this beyond what Mrs. Canter could give to rely upon.

The magistrates looked very grave when Vera's evidence was read, and Mr. Deedes saw they were strongly inclined to doubt its truth ; murmurs in the Court showed that the audience also found it difficult to believe.

" I shall now call Mrs. Canter to prove that Miss Tempest has walked in her sleep from a child," concluded Mr. Deedes, thinking that the more stress laid on Vera's previous somnambulistical feats, and the less on this last one, the better for her case.

Mrs. Canter in her weeds, her veil thrown back, her hands folded in front of her portly person, now came forward, looking as she felt, exceedingly important as she glanced with a contemptuous expression she strove in vain to control at the bench, which consisted of three magistrates, who it so happened were all small men.

"I knew it took two and two to make four, but I didn't know before that it took three small fools to make one big one," said Mrs. Canter to Reuben, when the magistrates took their seats.

"Mind your stops, Norah," whispered Reuben when Mrs. Canter went forward to give her evidence.

"Now, Mrs. Canter, tell us who you are and what you know of Miss Tempest's somnambulism," said Mr. Deedes.

"Well, gentlemen, my name is Canter, and I am a widow, and a widow I mean to remain. Before I married Canter I was nurse to Mr. Tempest's two children, Miss Vera and Master Rex, and if I hadn't been a fool I should have been nurse to Miss Vera now, and then this case would never have been brought before you gentlemen. But there, we are all young once in our lives and we are all silly more than once, some of us never anything else."

"Quite true, Mrs. Canter, but we want to hear what you can tell us about Miss Tempest's somnambulism," interrupted Mr. Deedes, wishing to stop the amusement Mrs. Canter was causing in the Court by her manner quite as much as by her words.

"Very good, sir ; but there, if I was to tell you all I know of Miss Vera's sleep-walking, I should keep you here all the night. She has done it all her life. Scores of times I have known her to wake me up, though for years I always tied her to the bedpost every night. She mostly walked if she was not quite well or if anything worried her, and generally she would be dreaming about what worried her when she walked."

"When was the last time you saw her walking in her sleep?" asked one of the magistrates.

"I can't say exactly, for since I married I had no chance of seeing her ; but she did not do it so often after she was grown up, though she always told me when she had been walking, and as I said before it was always when anything troubled her. She was pretty certain to do it that night after Reuben had been telling her about Mark Brown's interviews with that thief. She went to bed thinking about him and the diamonds, and she heard Mark open the dressing-room window to give Freeman the jewel-case in her sleep and got up and went to see who was in the room ; he fired at her and woke her and the first words she said were 'the diamonds, the diamonds,' showing what she was dreaming of," continued Mrs. Canter.

"But this is supposition, not evidence ; can you swear you have seen her walk in her sleep during the last ten years?" interrupted the presiding magistrate.

"Can I? Why, bless me, there is her own word for it, she who never told a story in her life; besides, haven't all the servants proved she was woke by the pistol that scamp, Mark Brown, fired; what more proof can you want? The Archdeacon and Mrs. Tempest can prove it too; that is eight against Mark, who never told the truth in his life except by accident," and Mrs. Canter looked daggers at the bench.

"But you will not swear you have seen her walk in her sleep for ten years?"

"No, I cannot," said Mrs. Canter angrily.

"I can," said Reuben Foreman, rising.

"You may stand down then, Mrs. Canter, and let the next witness come forward."

Mr. Deedes now called Mary the parlourmaid and Holmes, to prove that Reuben was not more than ten minutes with Vera on the Tuesday evening, instead of two hours as Mark had sworn; and then Reuben came forward looking very pale and grave.

His gigantic figure towered over the seated spectators and his handsome face was almost ghastly in its pallor, for he was pale with suppressed emotion. He stood with his sinewy hands clasped over the rail in front of him, the iron muscles standing out in thick coils, almost painfully suggesting the terrible strength latent in the brawny hands.

"My name is Reuben Foreman and I am the village blacksmith," said Reuben. "I have known Miss Vera Tempest all her life. First I wish to say I was in my own house on the night Mark Brown swears he saw me down by the canal. I came in with the minister at nine and he sat with me till nearly midnight, as he can prove, for he is in Court, and after he left I went to bed. But, gentlemen, I am here to say I was once down by the canal at midnight and met Miss Tempest there, and it is probable Mark Brown saw me then, for I know he was out that night. That occasion was a year ago, and I then saved Miss Vera's life."

This statement caused a murmur of excitement in the Court, followed by a solemn silence as the spectators listened breathlessly to what followed.

Reuben clutched the bar in front of him still tighter and turned a shade paler as he bit his lip and braced himself up to fulfil his self-appointed task. He paused a moment and the silence was so intense in the Court that the beating of his heart was the only sound audible to the blacksmith's ears, and then he raised himself slightly, still holding the bar in front of him, and continued his evidence.

"I was ill at the time," proceeded Reuben, "and my daughter Janet, who had been spending the winter at Marling with my sister, Mrs. Canter, was sent for to nurse me. My daughter was then married to Mr. Reginald Tempest; she had been his wife since the previous July, but I was not aware of it. After she was gone to bed

that night I heard a child cry ; and going up to her room I saw her lying asleep with an infant in her arms. You can guess what I suspected, and those who are fathers can perhaps partly guess what I felt ; but God forbid that any of you should guess what I did."

Once again Reuben paused, this time to wipe the huge drops of perspiration from his forehead, and once again he went on.

"Gentlemen, I took that innocent infant in my arms and I carried it down to the canal, meaning to drown it in the mill-pool and so, as I thought, save my daughter's fair name—my daughter who, praise God, is as pure as the driven snow."

Here the blacksmith dashed a hot tear from his face with one of his iron hands.

"But when I got to the water's edge," he continued, "and uncovered the sleeping child, it nestled up to my wicked heart and clasped its innocent fingers round my hand, and I dared not stain that hand with its blood. Just as I had decided to take the child back at once to its mother I heard the Rectory gate click, and looking round I saw Miss Vera with her hair all down her back and in her dressing-gown walking in her sleep and walking straight into the mill-pool. I hastily hid the baby in the hollow tree close by and hastened to Miss Vera, and standing right in her path with my back to the water's edge, I stopped her just in time ; another step or two and she would have been lying in that mill-pool."

Reuben paused again and the spectators, who were intensely excited, began to whisper loudly.

"Silence, or I will have the Court cleared," said Mr. Hammond, and once more Reuben went on.

"I went out that night to destroy a life and by God's mercy I saved one. Miss Vera was frightened when I woke her, and as soon as she recovered I took her home ; and she begged me to say nothing about it to anyone, as only Norah knew of her sleep-walking and Mr. Tempest would be very nervous if he were told. She also told me she generally walked if she was worried, and that she had that day heard from her brother that he was my Janet's husband, and she was dreaming of him when I woke her."

Reuben ceased speaking and was told by Mr. Deedes that he could sit down ; the blacksmith did so and heaved a great sigh of relief as he resumed his seat by the side of Mrs. Canter, who for once in her life was so taken aback that she did not know what to do, and therefore with characteristic wisdom did nothing at all.

Reuben's evidence, which had evidently cost him so great a sacrifice to give, told more in Vera's favour than a hundred witnesses to her sleep-walking powers could have done. No one could doubt the testimony of a man who to give it was forced to accuse himself of having partially yielded to so horrible a temptation. The blacksmith had established beyond a shadow of doubt that Vera had certainly on one occasion walked in her sleep, impelled thereto by a dream.

Mrs. Canter's evidence proved somnambulism was a habit with her; and finally Captain Tempest rose with two telegrams in his hand and said he had telegraphed to his nephew, Mr. Reginald Tempest, to ask if he were aware that his sister walked in her sleep, and he handed the reply to the bench.

The reply was: "I heard from Norah when in England that Vera walked in her sleep."

Then followed a brief discussion between the magistrates, after which the presiding magistrate addressed the Court in the following terms:

"We are of opinion that there is no case whatever against Miss Vera Tempest; we therefore dismiss the case with costs, and we recommend the police to keep a strict watch over Mark Brown."

"I have to ask that a summons may be granted for the arrest of Mark Brown, on a charge of perjury; my client, Archdeacon Ryot-Tempest, intends to bring an action against him," said Mr. Deedes.

"We will grant the summons; but if the accused can find bail to the amount of £100 we will admit him to bail, otherwise he must be taken into custody," said one of the magistrates.

Mark turned deadly pale on thus finding the tables turned upon himself, but he did not lose his presence of mind; and after a short conversation with his lawyer, the latter announced that though Mark was unable to find bail in his own recognisances he had no doubt he would be able to raise it before the bench rose.

Mark was then removed to another room in charge of a policeman until the bail was forthcoming; the Archdeacon and his party left the Court and received a small ovation outside, for the sympathy of the spectators had been entirely with the Archdeacon; and many people expressed their opinion that Mark Brown had stolen the diamonds as well as perjured himself, and the Archdeacon was strongly recommended to prosecute him on this charge also.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PROPHET'S MANTLE FALLS ON MRS. CANTER.

FATHER AMBROSE did not reach Woodford till the magistrates' meeting was over on Tuesday; he went straight to the convent, not wishing his presence to be known to the Archdeacon till he was sure it would be wise to announce it. As it happened, the station-master had been in Court when the case was tried and was able to give Father Ambrose a full account of it. From him too he learnt what an excitement Vera's disappearance had created; but not by word or sign did the wise old priest betray that he was any better informed on this point than the rest of the world.

He made a hasty meal and then he went up to the Rectory to

offer his sympathy to the Archdeacon ; he could easily account for his presence by saying he had seen the report of the robbery in the paper and had heard from Vera what trouble they were in ; and he was so old a friend that he knew the Archdeacon would not be surprised at receiving a visit from him. If he found the Archdeacon anxious about Vera he had her permission to tell him she was safe and her hiding-place was known to him ; and at any rate he was sure of a warm welcome.

He found the Archdeacon lying on a sofa in his study, quite worn out with the anxiety and excitement of the last week ; he suffered from weak action of the heart, and the intense relief of the dismissal of the charge against Vera was almost as bad for his physical condition as an adverse judgment would have been.

He rose from his sofa when Father Ambrose was announced, but the kind old priest was so shocked at the change in his old friend's appearance since he last saw him that he put him gently back.

"Lie down, my dear Archdeacon, lie down ; you ought to be in bed. I came to condole with you, but I am glad to find I may congratulate you instead."

"Yes, it is an intense relief ; but it is a terrible trial altogether. How did you hear of it ?"

"From Vera."

"Then she has written to you. Where is she ; do you know ? I only know that she is safe, and Deedes did not advise me to make any further inquiries ; but now that this trumped-up case against her has altogether failed there is no need for secrecy."

"No, except that I am not at liberty to tell you where she is. I know, and I know she is safe and well cared for ; but probably as soon as she hears this good news she will come home. Any letter entrusted to me will find her."

"She can't come home. I could not ask her to do so after the way she has been insulted by my wife. But my brother is only too anxious to have her till Raleigh comes home, and then, as I have quite decided, I shall not oppose the marriage any further. They can marry as soon as they please, if indeed this terrible affair makes no difference in his wishes. You see, Father Ambrose, until the robbery is brought home to the real culprits, of whom I have no doubt Mark Brown is one, and until the jewels are found, suspicion may attach to Vera, particularly as she has gone away from home. I blame myself entirely for that. I ought not to have left her alone that day, but I was anxious not to miss my first visitation."

"Vera is above suspicion, like Cæsar's wife," said Father Ambrose.

"Unfortunately Mrs. Ryot-Tempest does not think so ; indeed, until an hour or two ago it was her intention to prosecute Vera for the robbery, but I understand her solicitor has declined to take proceedings now ; and I must allow that to a prejudiced person the case

does, no doubt, look suspicious. If the police could only find that tramp whom they suspect!" said the Archdeacon wearily.

"Dear me, I understood that Mark was in custody. He has just gone past this window with a wheelbarrow," interrupted Father Ambrose, who was sitting by the window.

"Impossible! He surely cannot have found bail. May I trouble you to ring?"

Father Ambrose complied, and when the butler answered, the Archdeacon inquired if it were true that Mark was on the premises.

"Yes, sir, he is gardening for Mrs. Ryot-Tempest," replied the man.

"But he was in custody when I left the Court," said the Archdeacon in astonishment.

"Yes, sir, so I understood, but he has found bail. His lawyer has been here, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest paid the hundred pounds. The lawyer is with Mrs. Tempest now."

"Thank you, that will do," said the Archdeacon, summoning all the nerve he possessed to his aid to hide his emotion till the servant had retired.

"What am I to do? I can't keep Mark in my service, and evidently Mrs. Ryot-Tempest intends him to remain," said the Archdeacon helplessly, naïvely revealing to his friend how completely he was ruled by his wife.

"Well, there is this to be said—he is safer here than elsewhere. He is less likely to decamp from this house than if you dismissed him," said Father Ambrose.

"I must consult Deedes and my brother; they are in the house somewhere; let us go to them."

Captain Tempest and Mr. Deedes took the same view of the matter as Father Ambrose. They neither of them, however, concealed their disgust at hearing Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had found bail for Mark Brown; but they agreed with Father Ambrose that he would not be able to escape easily from the Rectory, since every one of the other servants had already confided to Mr. Deedes that they intended to keep a strict guard over him. They also agreed it was better that Vera should not return until something had been heard of the diamonds, and some trace of Freeman discovered. Her home certainly was not the place for her just now, and until the crime could be brought home to the real culprits, Mr. Deedes strongly advised keeping her out of the way.

"Write and tell her the case against her has been dismissed, and that we are bringing a suit against Mark Brown for perjury, and that we hope to bring the robbery home to him also; and if we succeed in that she can return in triumph. There is no need to let her know her step-mother still suspects her," said the lawyer; and his advice was acted upon.

While this consultation was going on, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was

closeted with Mr. Jones, Mark's lawyer, who was endeavouring to persuade her to let him undertake the case against Vera, her own solicitor having refused to proceed any further when the result of Mark's action against Vera was known. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who had been exceedingly annoyed at the judgment against Mark, was inclined to yield to Mr. Jones's persuasions; but the man's vulgarity disgusted her, and she was not sure that her object: namely, to prevent Vera marrying Captain Raleigh: was not already attained; since so proud a man might very well decline to marry a girl who had been accused of shooting a man and suspected of committing a robbery. However, she would not give the lawyer a final answer that day but would take a little time to think over the matter.

The next day something occurred which caused her to make up her mind very promptly. That something was the arrival of Captain Raleigh, which occasioned a great commotion in the Rectory. The Archdeacon was intensely relieved to see him, though the meeting was at first rather awkward. Captain Tempest was enchanted, Mark Brown terrified, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest dumbfounded, for she had no idea he was in Europe.

She turned livid when told that Captain Raleigh was in the house, but she indulged in no outburst of temper; on the contrary she was very calm, but she was all the more dangerous on that account. For the sake of appearances she and the Archdeacon continued to take their meals together; and the presence of Captain Tempest and Mr. Deedes, who were staying in the house, removed some of the awkwardness, for they treated her with cold civility and kept up a pretence at conversation in which the Archdeacon took as little part as possible.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest knew she would have to wait until dinner before she could discover what Captain Raleigh's intentions were, but she intended to find out then and she awaited the dinner-hour with the greatest impatience. She both hoped and feared he would remain to dinner; but Captain Raleigh though invited by the Archdeacon to do so had declined, not choosing to break bread with the woman who had been guilty of such conduct to Vera.

At dinner Mrs. Ryot-Tempest learnt that Captain Raleigh was most indignant at the accusation Mark had brought against Vera, and had expressed a hope the scamp would keep out of his reach or he would thrash him within an inch of his life.

"And he will do it too if he has the chance," said Captain Tempest.

"He would do better to thrash the thief," replied Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"He would do so in thrashing Mark in my opinion," retorted Captain Tempest.

"Meanwhile, what does he think of Vera's mysterious disappearance, may I ask?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"He thinks she will do well to remain where she is until she becomes his wife, which will probably be on her twenty-first birthday, a fortnight hence," said Captain Tempest.

"And as he has seen her since she left home, he does not consider her appearance mysterious," said the Archdeacon.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest replied by a scornful laugh and was silent for the rest of dinner.

"She means mischief," said Mr. Deedes in an undertone to Captain Tempest as he closed the door on his hostess when she left the gentlemen to their wine.

She did mean mischief, as they discovered the next day, when Mr. Deedes was informed that although her own solicitor refused to act for her, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest intended to prosecute Vera for stealing her diamonds. Mr. Jones was endeavouring to obtain a summons for her arrest, but the magistrates refused to grant one until after the first judicial inquiry into Mark Brown's case was heard the following Tuesday.

"If we can only find Freeman before then, this case against Miss Tempest will be quashed altogether. Freeman or the diamonds, they are our hope; and if we find neither I am half afraid they will grant a summons," said Mr. Deedes to Captain Raleigh.

"Let us offer a reward; I will offer £100 to anyone who shall give such information as shall lead to the discovery of either Freeman or the diamonds. I'll send an advertisement up to the papers to-night, and get posters printed," said Captain Raleigh.

Mr. Deedes agreed to this more because it gave the poor Captain some occupation than because he thought it likely to bring forth much fruit; for Raleigh was in the greatest state of excitement. He was less anxious than the Archdeacon, but he was more excited. He could do nothing but wander from his lodgings to the Rectory and back, talking now to Captain Tempest, now to the Archdeacon, now to Father Ambrose, now to Mr. Deedes. Then he would go into the village and spend an hour at the forge talking to Reuben, and on the Saturday after his arrival he decided he would go to Marling and see Mrs. Canter.

In truth Captain Raleigh might now fairly be reckoned as one of Mrs. Canter's disciples. He had great faith in her opinion; he had confidence in her judgment; he had little doubt she would be able to throw some light on the question that exercised him even more than Freeman or the diamonds; namely: on Vera's hiding-place, for he knew no more than he did when he was at Avranches on this point. Father Ambrose had kept Vera's secret well, and though he had undertaken to deliver letters from the Archdeacon and Captain Raleigh to her before he left Woodford, he was very careful not to say anything which could betray her hiding-place.

The Archdeacon believed her to be in the convent at Woodford; Captain Raleigh thought she was at Avranches; some lover's instinct

told him he was nearer her there than at Woodford. But he would go to Marling and consult Mrs. Canter ; it was possible, even probable she was in Vera's confidence. So to Marling he went.

As he walked up the drying-ground where Mary Jane's "survivals" were having it all their own way for a day or two, he heard sounds of weeping and wailing. These on entering the house he found to proceed from the three eldest Canter boys, who were seated on chairs in the kitchen, where their mother with Mary Jane's assistance was packing the clean linen into linen baskets, never profaned by any other use.

The baskets had that morning been utilised as storeys in a modern and miniature tower of Babel by Jack Canter and his brothers, who were now engaged in expiating their double offence of presumption and disobedience.

By her attendance at the police-court on the previous Tuesday, Mrs. Canter had, in her own language, "lost a day," consequently she was a day late in her work all the week ; and since to be slow with her work meant to be quick in her temper, the little CanTERS, mindful of the probable consequences if they transgressed any of the laws laid down for their observance, had been on their best behaviour all the week. Goodness, however, is sometimes apt to become monotonous, and on Saturday morning the Canter nature rebelled in the persons of Jack and his elder brothers, who constructed a tower of Babel with the empty linen baskets, regardless of the fact that to touch these baskets was a mortal sin in their mother's eyes.

Accordingly when Mrs. Canter entered the laundry and found her two eldest sons on the top of a stack of inverted linen baskets which were certainly not improved by these architectural efforts, and Jack in the act of ascending to the same eminence, retribution swift and sore followed, from the effects of which they had not wholly recovered when Captain Raleigh entered the house.

Mrs. Canter's delight at seeing the Captain, whom she did not know to be in England, was so great that she forgave the boys on the spot and sent her whole family out into the garden while she had a chat with her welcome guest.

"Do you know where *she* is, Mrs. Canter?" were Captain Raleigh's first words when they were left alone.

No need to particularise further who *she* meant. The Captain was in that state of mind when all the perfections of the gentler sex were embodied in one feminine form ; the world contained but one woman for him, and that woman was Vera.

"Not for certain, sir. I believe she is at the convent at Woodford. All I know is she was the ghost the servants are prating so much about, and she left the house in her poor aunt's nun's habit, which I have seen her dress up in," replied Mrs. Canter.

"Yes, she did, and I met her at Calais in it and at first thought she was a nun. She went to Father Ambrose at Avranches, and he

knows where she is. He has been over at Woodford and went back yesterday."

"Miss Vera is at Avranches then, you may depend, sir. Father Ambrose would have stayed till this mystery is cleared up if she had been at Woodford. Does she know you are in England?"

"By this time she does. I have written to her to tell her the Archdeacon has given his consent to our marriage, and Father Ambrose has promised to send or give her the letter."

"It is a pity the Archdeacon ever objected to the marriage, then all this trouble might have been saved. Since you are of different religions, one of you must give in; for there is no agreeing to differ in marriage, you must either agree or one must give in. When I married Canter he was a dissenter and I was a churchwoman, so I took him to church regularly every Sunday, and Miss Vera will do the same with you. Husband and wife must be one in religion if they are to be happy together."

"So we think, and Vera is going back to the faith into which she was baptised before we are married," said Raleigh.

"Well, sir, she has Catholic blood in her, so I suppose it'll come natural to her. In my opinion the husband should give in to the wife though, not the wife to the husband, but folks don't all think alike. We women make or mar our fortunes when we take a husband."

"That is true, Mrs. Canter, and I hope Vera will make hers when she takes me, unworthy as I am of her. The life of a woman can scarcely be said to be begun in its full sense until she is a wife; it is generally a dream, before marriage."

"And a reality after. Ah, Captain Raleigh, life is a game which if people were asked only the fools would care to play at. It is more trouble than it is worth even if you win, to say nothing about losing."

"If life ended at death I might perhaps agree with you in a general way, but death, you know, is only the gateway to the real life. And even if this life were all we had to live for, love would make it worth living."

"Ah! there is a good deal more talk than love in the world, just as there are more leaves than fruit in an orchard. I sometimes wonder if any of us ever really love anyone except ourselves; we think we do, but we think wrong very often."

"What do you think about this robbery?" said Raleigh, who, much as he appreciated Mrs. Canter's philosophy, could with difficulty withdraw his thoughts from the all-engrossing subject which enthralled them.

"I think Mark and Freeman stole the jewel-case; as for the diamonds, I don't believe they are stolen at all. Mrs. Jamieson Tempest is too clever and too fond of her jewels to have left them standing in that dressing-room when she knew there were burglars in the neighbourhood."

"But where are the diamonds then?"

"Mrs. Tempest only knows."

"But what object could she have in concealing them?"

"To throw suspicion on Miss Vera, whom she hates, and prevent you from marrying her."

"I can't believe it of her, Mrs. Canter; she is a dangerous woman, no doubt, but she is not so bad as that."

"We never know, sir, how good or how bad people are, because we never know enough of them; you might as well try to judge of my ironing by my washing as try to judge folks by what we see of them. People are a deal worse and a deal better than we give them credit for. We shall never know how good and how bad our neighbours are till the judgment day, and then we shall be too much engaged in our own business to trouble about other people's. You mark my words, Captain Raleigh; Mrs. Jamieson Tempest knows where those jewels are, and once you and Miss Vera are married they'll be found fast enough; though why she wants to prevent Miss Vera from marrying, when she has two husbands of her own already, one dead and one dying, I don't know. What I do know is, she'll have a third before long as sure as my name is and always will be Canter."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Canter? You don't think the Archdeacon's illness serious, do you?"

"Indeed I do, sir. Pride kills some folks; it'll kill him. He will never get over this trouble; he has never rightly got over his first wife's death; he will die of a broken spirit. He is like everyone else: he suffers more than folks think. It is the secret sufferings that kill people. Ask a child what it is crying for, and it will only tell you half its reason; grown up people are the same; their worst sorrows are the secret ones they never breathe to mortal ear. I never see a shabby coat or dress but I wonder what the rags underneath must be like, but only the wearer knows that. When does Mark Brown's case come on, sir?"

"There is a judicial inquiry next Tuesday, but unless we find Freeman or the diamonds before then it will probably be remanded for a week, though I don't think there is the slightest doubt it will be sent for trial ultimately."

"Is there any chance of Mrs. Tempest prosecuting Miss Vera?"

"She would if she could, but the magistrates won't grant her a summons till after next Tuesday, so it is very important for us to find the real thief by then if possible; and for the Archdeacon's sake, too, the sooner the matter is settled the better; all this anxiety is very bad for him."

"It will be the death of him, sir," said Mrs. Canter with the air of a prophetess, as she went to the gate to speed her parting guest.

"Is Saul among the prophets?" thought Raleigh as he journeyed back to Woodford, with the image of Mrs. Canter's portly figure

floating in his brain. But he speedily dismissed the thought, for there was certainly nothing consistent with the spirit of prophecy in Mrs. Canter's bodily aspect. Her flesh was too redundant to leave room for the development of spiritual powers ; no trace of long vigils was visible on her plump, smooth, shining face ; she would have scorned the ascetic lives which the seers of old led as foolish and superstitious, and considered her active life as a laundress far more useful to humanity in general than the contemplative lives of the saints and prophets.

But as the royal crown sometimes rests on a son of the people without a drop of royal blood in his veins, so the prophet's mantle sometimes descends, for a brief moment, on a nature which has not a spark of the fire of prophecy in its composition, and in that moment a flash of inspiration lightens the mind of the wearer. Perhaps the mantle had rested on Mrs. Canter's broad shoulders when she bid Captain Raleigh good-bye.

(To be continued.)



THEN, AND NOW.

LIGHTS—and the gleam of flying feet,
 And a perfume faint and rare ;
 And the quickened flash of gems and gold,
 And a sheen of glistening hair ;
 And the world to me so fresh and young,
 And the future all so fair !

More years ago than I care to count—
 And here once more I stand,
 With a heart that is dead to the perfumed air,
 Or the strains of the magic band.
 But the young eyes gleam as mine once gleamed
 At the touch of a worshipped hand.

Yet, if the love that was with me then
 Could only be with me now,
 I should feel again as I felt that night
 When I heard her whispered vow.
 It is not the years, but the vanished joys
 That furrow the weary brow.

Gone, like the breeze on a summer sea,
 Like the notes of a nest-ward lark ;
 And the lights are out and the music's mute,
 And love lies cold and stark ;
 And the world to me so old and sad,
 And the future all so dark !

SYDNEY HODGES.

THE PUNDITA RAMABAI.

ONE day towards the middle of the nineteenth century, two Hindu men of high caste went down to bathe in one of the large Indian rivers to which divine honours are paid.

One was a middle-aged man, the other was younger, and was remarkable for the bright intelligence that shone in his eyes and for the genial kindness which was written on every feature of his face. These two men had had no previous knowledge of each other ; one lived in the neighbourhood of the sacred river, the other was a passing traveller. Being, however, both men of high caste, as has before been said, they entered into conversation as they met on issuing from the water. In a surprising short space of time, as it seems to our Western ideas, they were talking like old friends ; and one of the facts which the elder man told the younger about himself was, that he had several daughters. A look of keen interest came into the younger man's face as he heard this. The two left the river together, and went to the elder man's house.

The result of that visit of courtesy was singular, to say the least of it, when we look at it in our own social light.

One of the elder gentleman's daughters was a little girl of nine, a pretty child, with a sweet, expressive countenance that had in it the dawn of thought. Girls of that age are not kept strictly within the walls of the zenana ; the child came running into her father's apartments, and as she played, sylph-like, hither and thither the eyes of the young stranger followed her eagerly.

Next morning that little girl left her father's house at the visitor's side, her father's newly-made friend of a day. Did she go as his little adopted daughter, we ask wonderingly ? No, she went as his bride. Such juvenile wives are not at all uncommon in India.

There is nothing more embarrassing for a Hindu of high caste than to be endowed with a large number of daughters. It is an utterly unheard-of and unprecedented thing among Hindus that a young lady should remain unmarried. It is also quite impossible for her to marry beneath her own exact and special rank ; it is, therefore, no easy task to provide husbands for a large family of girls.

The most extraordinary expedients are resorted to on such occasions. There are some high-caste Brahmins who go through the country being married to one young lady after another, until he stands in the enviable position of having some two or three hundred wives. The girls very likely never see him again after the ceremony is performed ; but they have thus escaped the much dreaded fate of living and dying in single blessedness, and it is believed that to have been married to a Brahmin secures them a high place in another world.

The little girl in question had fished a prize in the matrimonial market out of the sacred river. Her husband was a man of a peculiarly generous, noble, kindly character ; moreover he held, for a Hindu, very remarkable opinions with regard to female education. He thought that the minds of women ought to be opened and cultivated, and he was resolved that he would have an educated wife. The face of the little daughter of his river-made friend seemed, as has been said, to promise special intelligence, and this was why it was he was at once attracted by her.

At first, however, the poor little bride was very far from regarding her position as a desirable one. An educated woman is looked upon as nothing less than an impossible anomaly among high-caste Hindus. It was the intention of the husband to educate his small wife, but he knew that what he was going to do would make him an object of the most excessive ridicule to all his male friends and relations.

He therefore resolved to withdraw into the most complete retirement to prosecute his object ; and to do this he carried off his small bride at once into the solitude of the mountains.

Here the first experiences of matrimonial life were anything but reassuring and comfortable for the poor little girl.

The husband, whose broad, kindly nature was flavoured with a spice of eccentricity, took no servant or attendant with them in their long journey. Their tent was pitched in the midst of a vast forest. There lay the child-bride, trembling with terror beneath her warm rug of rich fur, while the husband, with true western chivalry, kept guard through the night with his drawn scimitar ; and from afar all the many sounds of the forest reached her ear.

In spite of these very uncomfortable and eerie nights, the young lady's education went on briskly and successfully and her physical development also prospered in the mountain air.

The husband had no mind to change his novel course of action, and continued to live entirely out of the world. With all his enlightened notions with regard to women, he had a strong belief that the female intellect concentrates itself with the utmost difficulty on study ; and he thought that the less distractions his pupil had the better.

Thus time went on, till the child had become a beautiful and highly-cultivated young woman. To this pair children were born in due course, and one of them was a daughter whom they named Ramabai.

Ramabai's mother had resolved that her own educational advantages, which she had now learned greatly to prize, should be shared by her daughter. She made up her mind that Ramabai should know all she could teach. Her husband had made her a proficient in sanscrit, and this language, difficult though it is, she would impart to her child. The daytime, however, gave no empty hour for the lessons to begin ; the father was not as wealthy as he had been, and from dawn

to evening the wife had to be busy in her household affairs. Therefore, that she might have time to teach her child, she woke her every morning before the sun had flashed into the eastern sky, soothed with tender, caressing words her complaints at being roused from sleep, and taught her the sanscrit characters.

This early teaching, and the application which the study of sanscrit rendered necessary, no doubt woke up Ramabai's intellectual powers to a singular degree for the intellectual powers of a Hindu girl, and strengthened her will and resolution and the whole structure of her mind and character.

Ramabai's father lost his sight in middle-age, but this did not make him cease to be a diligent inquirer after truth—a man who in everything was far in advance of his nation. He wandered about from place to place in India, gathering up all the knowledge he could by the way and widening as much as possible his mental horizon. Wherever he went his whole family went with him, for he was tenderly attached to them. The quick, retentive mind of Ramabai took in rays of light on all sides and from all with which she came in contact, until, as she stepped from childhood to womanhood, she shone forth a really brilliant lamp of female intellect.

Ramabai's father entirely freed all his womankind from the restraints which are always laid upon women of high caste in India. Ramabai mixed familiarly in society with men, both Hindus and Europeans, and exchanged ideas with them. Hindu Mrs. Grundy held up her hands very high indeed and opened her eyes, but the girl with the lovely, spiritual face went her own way.

And now a picture rises before us that had never been seen before in India; a picture more wonderful than the most ancient Hindu temple, with its rich store of carving and tracery.

The doors of a large room are thrown wide open to-day in one of the great cities in India. There are rows of benches placed in it, and there is evidently going to be some sort of an assembly. It must be a crowded assembly that is expected too, for the seats are packed as close as the bricks in a box of toys.

Very soon they come thronging in: young English officers who don't quite know how to pass the time, as there are no tigers near to kill; civilians with their air of dignified ennui; grave Hindus in their white turbans; Jews with their keen, inquiring faces; European ladies in smart Parisian bonnets. What are they all come to see? What are they all come to hear?

Let us wait a few minutes and we shall know.

There is a little raised platform at the further end of the room; evidently someone is expected to appear upon it; all eyes are turned towards it. What figure is going to show itself there? Shall we behold some solemn professor in spectacles, or will it be an Indian juggler who is going to astonish the company with his marvellous

tricks? We ask ourselves these questions as the minutes glide on, and still the crowd waits in eager expectation.

Suddenly, on the steps of the platform there is a light patter made by two little feet which are dancing rather than walking up them. The form that meets our view has certainly nothing scholastic about it. A slender, girlish figure, in a costume that mingles East and West harmoniously; a dusky face with large luminous eyes and chiselled features; a face in which the lamp of thought is shining brightly; two little hands that are remarkable for quick, nervous motion as they move to emphasise her words, while the silver bangles on the slight flexible wrists make a musical tinkle. The delicate lips open, the words flow out freely and gracefully and in melodious sentences: and a high caste Hindu woman has given a public lecture.

To appreciate the full significance and boldness of this step taken by Ramabai towards the emancipation of her sex in India, we must realise the seclusion and childish ignorance in which the high caste Hindu woman lives and dies. It is a seclusion so complete that not long ago an old Hindu lady of rank declared that she had never seen a tree except in a picture. It is an ignorance which so dwarfs the mind, that a young Hindu wife and mother, in whose veins ran the blood of princes, when asked by an English lady what present she should send her, answered, "A doll." What, then, must have been the courage and intellect of the Hindu girl who, out of such darkness and weakness as this, could mount on to the lecturer's platform?

Ramabai was still in early womanhood when she married. Her husband was a Hindu gentleman, who, in mental enlightenment, was fully worthy of her; he tried in no way to shackle her freedom of thought and action, and was proud of his wife's bright, intellectual gifts. The pair did not believe in the old Hindu deities, but as yet the light of Christianity had reached neither of them. Therefore at their marriage there was no religious ceremony, but their union was a civil one according to the Indian law.

Ramabai's wedded life was a brief sail down a placid golden river. No mist or cloud of any kind rose to dim the sunshine of her happiness. Her husband believed in her and adored her, and worked at her side in the cause of progress. To add to her joy a little daughter was born to her. But that calm sunshine was to last for Ramabai only for an hour of life's morning. A storm was at hand; a chill, heavy, desolating storm. A visitation of cholera swept over India; and Ramabai's husband, after but a year and a half of sweet union with her, was one of the first victims who fell under the scourge.

Ramabai was now a widow, and as we speak the word with regard to her, we must recollect what the word "widow" means among high caste Hindus.

It means to part with all the glittering, tinkling ornaments which are the Hindu woman's delight; it means never to wear even a gold

thread again ; it means to spend year after year in a darkened room without a single pastime or employment to help the moving onward of the leaden hours ; it means to subsist on one scanty meal a day ; it means to be treated, even by servants, with patronising contempt ; it means to be shunned as a creature of evil omen, whose very neighbourhood should be avoided with dread. All this, and much more that is dark, that is bitter, that is degrading does the word "widow" mean for the high caste Hindu lady. No wonder that a Hindu father when he blesses his daughter ends his benediction with the words : "The gods grant you may die before your husband."

Into such a position as this would Ramabai have fallen among her own people in her widowhood ; but her courageous energy freed her from it. A great longing had for many a year drawn her towards England, the land where a woman reigned ; the land where women won themselves fair and lofty names in art and literature ; the land where women did brave work and were blessed for it. Almost immediately, therefore, after her husband's death she left India, and the outraged cry of such conduct in a widow that rose up in Hindu society, behind her, and with her little daughter at her side reached the shores of England.

In England she remained for some time. There her mind received fresh light and cultivation, and there she was baptised a Christian ; her mind and heart had both long turned towards the teaching of the gospel, and now she professed it openly. From England she travelled to America, where she was received very warmly by many intellectual American men and women, and where her bright intelligence gained a yet more widened view of men and things.

Ramabai has now returned to India, where she is labouring for the enlightenment and uplifting of her own sex. One of her chief objects is to emancipate Hindu widows from the bondage in which they are held. She has opened a school, where she receives them and educates them to become teachers. Instead of their sitting in dumb apathy in darkened rooms, these young widows will now become agents for spreading light through the Zenanas, and by means of the Zenanas, through the whole of the people of India.

Ramabai is doing a grand and glorious work, and let all England follow her with blessing and sympathy.

ALICE KING.



THE SUBSTANCE OF A SHADOW.

BY JEANIE GWYNNE BETTANY.

I.

‘ **H** E is well connected, I believe ? ”

“ Unexceptionably.”

“ And good-looking ? ”

“ I have heard so.”

“ But he is *married* ! ”

Miss Michelson uttered this last remark, breaking in upon a conversation which was taking place between two of her visitors.

It was Miss Michelson’s “ at home ” day, and her “ at homes ” were always well attended. It must not therefore be inferred that she was a great favourite. As a matter of fact, the first and third Fridays in every month were dreaded by everyone in the village of Wraxall—that is, the handful of personages constituting the society of the place. But no lady who valued her reputation had the courage to be absent, and thus fall a victim to Miss Michelson’s scathing innuendos.

“ But he is married ! ” Could such a simple remark have malice in it ? Possibly ; inasmuch as the ladies to whom it was addressed had marriageable daughters who had nearly passed the period allotted to woman for the furtherance of matrimonial projects, and the young surgeon who had bought Doctor Barnes’s practice appeared to be a last chance to be scrambled for.

“ Married ! ” cried both ladies, simultaneously. “ Are you sure of it ? ”

“ They are at this moment on their wedding tour—do try some iced coffee—No ? Well, then, I will tell you about Doctor Heathcote. Mrs. Jones wrote to me from Cologne, saying that he and his bride were staying at the same hotel as herself, and she informs me that Mrs. Heathcote is a mere child, scarcely eighteen, and Dr. Heathcote has married her from a convent-school in France ; this much Mrs. Jones was able to ascertain.”

Miss Michelson, having imparted this information, proceeded to pronounce sentence upon the absent young doctor and his marriage, as it was her wont to do on all the actions of her neighbours. Doctor Heathcote was as yet no neighbour of hers, but he would be one in another week, and so came under her jurisdiction.

None are such authorities upon marriage as the unmarried, and Miss Michelson looked very wise indeed as she laid down the law to her visitors, who were for the most part mothers of families.

“ When a man marries a young wife, he lives to regret it,” said

the hostess, with a little sharp nod that shook her cap-ribbons, and caused the two little grey spiral curls on either side of her face to vibrate as if they were in reality the springs they so much resembled.

"And the child-wife lives to regret it too," she went on, warming to her subject. "I knew one man who rapped the pretty white fingers of his young wife—with a paper knife!"

At this speech there was a general laugh.

"It was no laughing matter," went on Miss Michelson. "An ivory paper-knife may not hurt much, but it is heavier than kisses, and the effect doesn't go off so soon, I'll promise you! Now I have a niece, Marie, at school in France, and I shall keep her there until she is twenty-one, out of harm's way. For my part, I can't imagine what young Mrs. Heathcote's parents or guardians were thinking of to allow her to marry in that way."

"Perhaps it was a runaway match," suggested Mrs. Wilmot, the most daring of the two ladies with the "passées" daughters.

"Impossible," rejoined the hostess. "The sisters in these convents are too watchful."

"Still, one has heard of such things," persisted Mrs. Wilmot.

"In fiction, no doubt," rejoined Miss Michelson tartly.

The conversation was fortunately interrupted at this point by the entrance of the master of the house, Miss Michelson's half-brother, a bachelor of forty or thereabouts. He was the vicar of the parish of Wraxall and Rural Dean. Sunday-school treats now came upon the tapis, so we will leave the vicarage society and transport the reader, with his permission, to Germany.

II.

IT was early morning, scarcely eight o'clock in fact, and the Rhine steamer *Niederwald* was plying its way steadily through the mists that enshrouded the picturesque mountain-ranges which rise so majestically on either side of that part of the Rhine between Coblenz and Königswinter.

There were many passengers, even at that early hour, and among them a young Englishman in a grey tourist suit. He looked about five-and-twenty, and was of medium height, broad-shouldered and well made. His hair was short, and his bronzed face was pre-eminently good-humoured, especially as to the mouth and eyes, these latter having a merry daring in their brown depths which betokened a healthy mind on which, as yet, no care had left its impress.

He was standing upon the deck with his "Baedeker" in his hand, out of which he read an extract now and then to a young lady—very young in appearance—who was seated near him wrapped in a comfortable fur cloak, for though it was July the early morning was chilly on the river.

The girl's face was, if not exactly pretty, at least wonderfully piquant, and had that charm of charms : a perfectly guileless expression. Her eyes were of that peculiar blue-grey in which the light loves to dance. Her hair, which was coiled upon the shapely head, was of a fugitive nut-brown which waved and curled and broke loose in little rebellious love-locks, which the wind lifted and dropped again softly on the white forehead or rounded cheek.

Very well suited to each other these two appeared. Their youth, their joyousness, their utter freedom from care created a harmonious halo about them, clothing them as did the mist the mountains ; but the mist would lift presently and reveal the mountains in all their grand proportions. And their holiday garb must soon be doffed, and the young couple must show what they are in the struggle of life. They both knew this vaguely and discussed it laughingly.

"Another week, Marie, and I shall be going my rounds in the oldest of old villages, and you mustn't let my dreadfully sober looks frighten you then—for you know a medical man must look grave."

"Frighten *me*," rejoined Marie, in a soft, bell-like voice which had a slight foreign accent. "Nothing can frighten me but rats ; there were rats at the convent, grey ones with, oh, such long tails. Your grave looks frighten me ! when I was so brave as to run away and be married ! And oh, it is so much nicer to run away to be married and make everyone cross ! Won't Aunt Rachel be angry when she hears from the sisters ! I did not say whom I had married when I sent the little note."

Dr. Heathcote—for of course it was he—now seated himself beside his bride. The mist had lifted, and before them on the left rose the Drachenfels, its summit bathed in golden sunlight. They had carefully parcelled out the remaining week of their honeymoon. They were to land at Königswinter, and ascend the Drachenfels and then go on to Cologne by another steamer.

"Look, Marie," said George Heathcote, "there is a cave in that mountain side, hidden away among the vines ; we should be able to make it out from this position—yes, there it is ! Well, there the mythical dragon was said to live ; Siegfried destroyed it, and became invulnerable. It reminds me oddly enough of something Dr. Barnes said when he sold me his practice. 'Heathcote,' said he, 'there is a dragon in the village ; slay it, and all will go well with you. Otherwise—there is an elderly lady whom you must succeed in pleasing, if you hope to keep your practice.'"

"Leave *me* to please her, George," cried Marie, who had risen and was now resting her daintily-gloved hands on the side of the steamer, the better to feast her eyes on the lovely scene before her.

"And whom could you *not* please !" rejoined the young doctor with enthusiasm.

"I will tell you," cried Marie, laughing. "I can't please Aunt

Rachel—she is so—well, so *difficult*. She has come to see me sometimes at the convent, and once in the church where you first saw me, and where you gave me the dear little love-notes——”

Here the digression would doubtless have led into the recital of the wooing and the winning which had, like many another, been achieved by assiduous church-going, glances, and, finally, what Marie called “love-notes;” but the *Niederwala* had drawn up to the landing-stage at Königswinter, and luggage had to be stowed away in an improvised cloak-room consisting of a covered boat, which afforded Marie immense amusement. Then came the carriage drive to the top of the mountain.

It so chanced that the young couple were alone when they gained the summit, so could enjoy the scene before them after their own fashion—and the fashion was not a new one. The young bridegroom’s arm encircled the trim little waist of his bride, and her sunny head, with its rebellious ringlets, rested confidently against his shoulder.

Far below, like shimmering silver, lay the Rhine, curving between the vine-clad mountain sides, whilst miles of fertile country stretched away to the far horizon in a patchwork of gorgeous colouring. Behind and to the left rose the peaks of the six sisters of the Drachenfels. It was a view to live in the memory. So Dr. Heathcote seemed to think, for he said to his wife :

“We do well to look long upon this landscape, Marie, for, my love, it will be many a day ere we look upon it again.”

“Oh, but we can come here next summer for our holiday if we like,” replied Marie promptly.

“I fear we shall have to forego holidays for a time, little wife,” rejoined her husband hesitatingly, for he was loth to cloud the sunny face that was turned so trustfully towards him. Still she must be told something of what her life would be. And this knowledge made him momentarily regret the impulse and passion which had led him to carry away this sweet maiden from the haven of her convent-school to face life as a poor doctor’s wife.

“You see, Marie,” he went on, “I spent nearly all my father left me to buy a practice, and I never thought I should fall in love on my holiday trip and take home a wife. But when I saw you, I felt I could not live without you ; and when you told me you had no one but your aunt, and that she would not let you marry, there seemed nothing for it but to carry you off.”

“But you and I must go to Wraxall to see my aunt ——” began Marie.

Heathcote started, and exclaimed suddenly :

“*Wraxall* ; did you say *Wraxall* ?”

“Yes,” answered Marie, bewildered. “It is the place where lives my Aunt Rachel.”

“It is the place where I have bought a practice ; the place where

we are to live. How came I not to mention the name before—or you? But tell me, love, what is your Aunt Rachel's other name."

"Michelson," replied Marie.

"Michelson!" cried George. "Then, Marie, that is the lady Dr. Barnes said I must please if I hoped to get on in the village. Oh, Marie, you must try and please your aunt now; for I have, indeed, forfeited all chance of her favour."

"She loved my mother," said Marie, tearfully, "and she isn't unkind; but oh! she told me that my mother had married against her wishes; and now, if we are to live near her, she will be able to scold me every day. I thought we might go and see her when we were in England, and then go right away if she were very cross!"

And the poor little maiden began to weep.

Of course the tears were kissed away, and the smile was wooed back by encouraging words. But the beauty seemed to have faded from the landscape by reason of the uncomfortable discovery they had made; so they turned their backs upon it, and descended through luxurious woods down the mountain side, and made their way to the landing-stage, from whence they were soon borne towards Cologne. Towards also, as each felt, the end of their holiday and the beginning of their troubles.

III.

WE spare the feelings of our readers so far as to omit all but the concluding remarks of Miss Michelson's wordy outburst on her first meeting with her niece Marie after the events just recorded. Her language, at all times unnecessarily strong, at least in the opinion of others, had gained a rancour and pungency on this occasion not easy to be imagined, much less described. But the good lady had something to be said on her side. Marie's mother had been a favourite of hers, and her especial charge after their mother's death; and she had married a worthless adventurer, and cut herself off from her friends for ever. She had, at her death, left her orphan child to her sister Rachel's care. Miss Michelson, loving this child only the more for her mother's fault—and for her mother's misery (for her husband had even raised his hand against the poor girl)—resolved to place Marie in a convent-school until the impressionable age should be over. And lo! Marie had "gone and done likewise," at least as regarded the marriage without consent. And this was not all. Miss Michelson had been allowed to call upon Mrs. Heathcote without a word of warning.

The doctor had been strongly in favour of going to her and confessing all; but poor Marie, child as she was, had implored him to put off the evil day and wait till her aunt called upon them in the ordinary course—a mistaken policy that was to cost them dear.

The consternation Miss Michelson felt when she was ushered into

the pretty drawing-room, with its dark oak furniture and quaint draperies, may be imagined when she recognised in Mrs. Heathcote her niece, who had eloped from the convent.

"Well, Marie," she said in conclusion, "so far I will spare you. I will smooth over the matter as regards society here—but, mark my words, you have made too bad a beginning to end well. I know men" (she had in her mind the husband of her unfortunate sister), "and your husband will end by treating you badly. They always do when girls have no more sense than to run away with them."

Marie had been in tears during the first part of her aunt's outbreak, but at these last words she took courage. Her aunt would accept the marriage—that was everything. As for her idea about George ill-using her, it was something to laugh at.

"Dear aunt," she began, placing one of her pretty hands on the stiff fold of Miss Michelson's silk dress appealingly: "you must let me make amends in the future. Indeed I know I have been wrong, and you are good indeed to so far overlook it."

Miss Michelson would have been much harder-hearted than she really was if she had not been moved by the lovely face turned up to her at that moment, smiling, with the fresh tears still upon it. She stooped and kissed Marie's forehead. She kept her opinion about Marie's husband's future conduct all the same.

"Oh, George!" cried Marie, bursting into the surgery when her aunt had gone, "she has forgiven me, and we shall have no more worries."

"Except rats!" said the doctor smiling.

"Ah, those rats!" echoed Marie dolefully. "Whatever shall we do about them? This very afternoon one crossed my dressing-room when I was fastening on my brooch, and I ran screaming downstairs."

Dr. Barnes's house, which George Heathcote had taken, was a quaint Elizabethan residence with plenty of superfluous room in it; for which reason it may be the rats had installed themselves in unwonted numbers. The whole of the upper storey was and had been for years given up to them; but this was no reason to the rat-mind that they should confine themselves to these quarters. Hence, what time George could spare from his patients and from the re-arrangement of his surgery was devoted to pursuing these invaders his pretty wife so much dreaded.

Everybody called, and society expressed itself charmed with Miss Michelson's niece. As for Miss Michelson herself, she relapsed into ordinary society relations with the young couple, receiving them and dining with them as the rest did. But further than this she would not go; and when Marie asked her advice on a matter of housekeeping, told her in very plain terms that since she had not seen fit to consult her judgment as regarded the most important step of her life, she must continue to manage the rest as she could.

Further than this, she told her niece that under the circumstances she had made a will leaving her money to a mission to the Hottentots, and therefore Marie must look for nothing from her.

This troubled Mrs. Heathcote not at all; she and her husband were too happy in themselves. Moreover, the practice was good and they could save.

Had Miss Michelson only been *told*, however, instead of being left to find out that Mrs. Heathcote was no other than her own niece, there is little doubt that her forgiveness would have been complete. But she had been made to look ridiculous, she considered, and she could not forget it. It followed then that her mind ran constantly upon the prophecy she had made, and she looked for its fulfilment, in spite of the fact that George Heathcote and his young wife had come to be spoken of as an example of connubial bliss. "He would end by ill-treating her—she had said it, and her words always came true."

IV.

A YEAR passed, and a new happiness came to the doctor's home—Marie had a son. Had it been a daughter it would have been called "Rachel," in hopes of healing the wound which still rankled in Aunt Michelson's mind. But it was a boy, and Marie suggested that her aunt should be asked to be its godmother.

"No, Marie," the lady had answered ungraciously, when it was proposed to her: "I have resolved to be in no way responsible for other people's children again."

"Venomous old woman," exclaimed George angrily, when his wife informed him of the result of the interview. "I propose we let her alone for the future, to be pleased or displeased as she chooses."

Doctor Heathcote was at that moment standing, hat in hand, ready to go on his professional round. The morning was so beautiful that he chose to dispense with his carriage, and enjoy a walk between the scented hedge-rows through which his way led him. He could gather a few wild roses for Marie too, he thought.

He was engaged in an attempt to gather a particularly graceful spray, which grew so high as to be nearly out of reach, when Miss Michelson herself appeared in sight. She was in fact on her way to the doctor's house for the purpose of presenting the baby with a silver "rattle"—a sort of peace-offering, for she had acknowledged to herself after Marie's visit that she had carried resentment a little too far in wounding the young mother through the baby. She saw George before she came up to him, and resolved to be gracious. But what was her astonishment when the young doctor, instead of stopping and extending his hand and offering a few kindly words as he had always done before, raised his hat courteously, but with evident coldness, and passed on without a word of greeting.

For a few moments Miss Michelson stood still in the lane, watching George's retreating figure blankly; then with a look of mingled bitterness and scorn she passed on her way. But she did not call upon Marie, nor send the gift she had intended for the baby.

George reported the incident to his wife at dinner that evening, and laughingly added: "She looked angry enough to be the ruin of me, but I am too firmly established to fear her influence now." But he could not help feeling a wish that he had a little money in hand. His expenses were heavy. He had spent a good deal on alterations and improvements of his house, and Wraxall people were slow in their payments he had found. The bank had allowed him to overdraw a little, and would go further he thought, and of course the money was safe to come in. Yet somehow, now it was over and he was calmer, he was not sure that he had done a wise thing in affronting Miss Michelson.

He said nothing to Marie of all this, however, and to her unclouded mind the whole episode was amusing and nothing more. She soon changed the subject for a more interesting one to her feminine mind—her costume for the garden party at Mrs. Wilmot's, of Stone Grange.

"It's such a lovely shade of grey, George," she began, "touched here and there with coral-pink——"

"What? the baby?" inquired her husband, who had scarcely heard.

"The baby! no, my new dress; it came home this afternoon. And my hat is a chip straw of the same shade, with a long feather to match, just ever so little tipped with coral."

Here the page-boy entered with a note for Mrs. Heathcote. She glanced over the contents, a cloud of disappointment gathering on her bright face.

"What is it?" asked her husband concernedly, when the door was closed behind the boy.

"Oh, it's from Mrs. Wilmot—putting off the garden party. Oh, but it is such a *déception*!" (Marie had overcome to a great extent her foreign way of speaking English, but fell into it occasionally.)

Mrs. Wilmot's letter brought disappointment only. There were letters to come, however, which were to cause trouble.

It was about a week after George Heathcote's encounter with Miss Michelson in the lane that he came into the drawing-room where his wife sat playing with her baby, and trying to woo from his wide-open eyes the first light of recognition. He looked so pale and perturbed that Marie started to her feet, crying, "George, you are not ill?"

"No, dear," his white lips made answer, "but a little anxious. Be good enough to ring for nurse to take baby. I want to talk to you."

He had an open letter in his hand, and when the nurse had

carried off the baby, he sat down by his wife and spread it before her. There was a cheque projecting from between the folds.

"Is there something not all right about the cheque?" she asked.

"The cheque is all right," he made answer. "But, Marie—the letter contains a dismissal."

"A dismissal? Oh, George!"

"Yes, dear, and it has not been the first letter of this sort that I have received within two or three days. It is growing so serious that I have felt it necessary to tell you."

"Oh, what can it mean? but they are strange, these people—they are cruel," cried Marie, the indignant colour rising to her cheeks.

"It is not these people, Marie—they have reason, or think they have, which is much the same as far as they are concerned. There is but one explanation: someone has been slandering me."

"Do you mean my aunt, George?"

"I can think of no one else; yet I cannot believe that she would ever lower herself so far as to invent a calumny, however much she may dislike me. It is very mysterious, and I don't know what steps to take."

Dr. Heathcote did not by any means make the most of his difficulties to his wife. He did not tell her, for instance, that Colonel Bleuett, with whom he had dined on the most amicable terms ever since he had come to Wraxall, and who often dropped in on his way home from his club to have a hand at whist with the doctor and his wife, even though a "dummy" had to come in—he did not tell Marie that Colonel Bleuett had "cut him dead" that very morning. Nor did he tell her that her uncle, the Rev. John Michelson—a gentleman of a very peace-loving disposition—had gone over a stile and crossed a meadow obviously with the intention of avoiding him, because, or so George thought, he might have felt compelled to administer a pastoral rebuke, a contingency the worthy clergyman looked upon as a veritable cross.

"What have I done?" George kept asking himself.

A week passed away, and George's face looked haggard. More cheques, more dismissals, more refusals to explain. The young doctor had called on a few of those patients who had been more intimate with him and begged for an explanation, but he had been met by cold disdain, or a "not at home," that made his heart sink within him. More than this, those patients who could not send a cheque, and who could not therefore dismiss him summarily, as so many had done, treated him as if they only submitted to his services on sufferance. The poor fellow felt at last that he should die, or at least be bereft of his senses, unless some solution, some relief, should be forthcoming.

At last he did what most people would have done at first: he went to the Vicarage and asked to see Miss Michelson.

As he stood on the threshold of the Vicarage a tumult of thought

welled up within him ; anger, hatred, and all uncharitableness, some would have termed his mood. As for himself, he was conscious of but two sensations, misery and helplessness ; this latter not in an unmanly sense, for which of us, be we ever so valiant in sight of a foe, can deny a feeling of terror combined with helplessness if the foe be in ambush ?

If things were to go on as they had done the last fortnight, George Heathcote feared to face what must be the outcome. True, money had come in, but he owed money to the bank and elsewhere, and if his practice dwindled, as it threatened to do, as it was doing, nothing but ruin could result.

Oh, Marie, Marie—bright little vision, made only for a summer day ! how, how should she stand the winter of adversity ?

So he was thinking when the door opened, and in reply to his question he was told that Miss Michelson was in London.

He turned wearily away, and crossed a meadow before he felt really conscious of what he was doing.

He was roused by a cheery voice close to him ; and cheery it was, though the owner (a Mr. Thorpe, Solicitor) was proverbial for intemperate habits.

"See here, doctor," said the voice cheerily. "You look down on your luck—you must cheer up ; you can live this out. I've had to live ill-report out myself more than once. Hang it, man, we're all human, and do in one moment what we regret all our lives."

"Thorpe," began Heathcote, huskily, "if you know what it is that people say against me—in humanity tell me."

The doctor had grown too desperate to mince matters.

"Well, you see, doctor—your blinds are white, and a shadow shows on them—and the cries were heard by more than one, and when it got about——"

"Blinds !—shadows !—cries ! What do you mean, Thorpe ?"

"To be plain, old fellow, you were over-seen or over-heard or both that night, when you took an extra glass and quarrelled with your wife."

"By my life, Thorpe, I never had a miss-word with my wife in my whole life. How could I ? What a brute I should be ! She is the sweetest—fairest——"

"We know all that, my boy, but when the drink is in the wit is out ; and one may forget that one's wife is the sweetest and fairest under its influence."

"I protest, Thorpe—believe me or not as you choose—I never drink ; I am all but a teetotaler. For heaven's sake tell me plainly what all this is."

"Well, it's very queer, Heathcote, if such a story could get about for nothing ; but anyone may get overtaken for once in his life, which is the case with you, I suppose——"

"Go on !" interrupted the doctor.

"Well then, Heathcote, the upshot of all is this : Someone passing your house late one night saw your shadow in the act of striking with a stick, and heard your wife's cries——"

George burst into such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that Thorpe looked at him in utter amazement.

"Oh, Thorpe," he presently said, "you must think me mad, but I can't help it ; to think that a man's reputation should hang on such a thread !"

"Pray explain yourself," said the solicitor with dignity, for he did not in the least understand this outbreak.

"Well then," resumed the doctor : "I was killing a rat, and my wife screamed—she is so afraid of them—and somebody saw the shadow on the blind of a man in the act of striking, heard the cries, drew inferences and spread a report."

It appeared later that Miss Michelson herself was that passer-by, and reported the doctor's misconduct, as the fulfilment of her prophecy, to one or two admiring friends, who immediately proceeded to enlighten and inflame the whole village.

The doctor and his wife suffered at first, but they gained ultimately ; for the whole village seemed to think that they could not do enough to make them forget that miserable fortnight.

As for Aunt Michelson, she made a new will ; leaving everything unconditionally to the young doctor and his wife and their heirs for ever.

She has also, so report says, bespoken the position of godmother to Marie's next child ; and all parties have found that when investigation steps in there is not much Substance in a Shadow.



IN SUNNY CLIMES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND," "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.



DANTE'S HOUSE.

WE turned our backs with reluctance upon the fair City of Flowers. Our sojourn in Sunny Climes was passing away. We were gradually moving northwards : still for a time under the blue skies of Italy, but the rich colouring of the South, the almost tropical vegetation, the voluptuousness of life and manners was changing into the colder, sterner influences of the North. North by comparison, and cold and stern by comparison ; for in the rich plains of Lombardy to which we were hastening there is no deficiency

of colouring or of fertility. They are wide and grand, full of associations at once warlike, historical and domestic ; and the knight of the sword and the monk with cowl and sandalled shoon have both gazed with the eye of possession and the power of rule upon the vast plains bounded by the distant undulating Apennines, the far-famed Alps.

We had taken our last look at Florence. To Mauleverer it was a city full of sad-sweet recollections. Twenty years ago, a child of eight, he had stood on the quays of the Arno and watched the flowing river in company with those who had passed into the silent land. He was almost alone in the world. Memory had awakened sorrowful recollections ; and the flowing river, and the heights of Fiesole

and all the broad outlines of the city were haunted with forms and faces that had become shadows to him. For we are essentially creatures of association. The scent of a flower, the fragment of a melody, the line of a poem, the surging of the sea, or the soft murmuring of the wind through forest trees, may in a moment open the floodgates of memory and bring back, with all their pain or pleasure, scenes and events that have long been closed and sealed chapters in our lives.

Once more and for the last time we had gazed upon the flowing waters of the Arno, above which the full moon rises in her course, month after month, age after age. We had stood again upon the heights, and looked down upon this fair city of palaces and churches; this casket enclosing such art treasures, legacies from the great masters and the intellectually rich and powerful past. We had gazed mournfully, wonderingly upon the matchless view, with all its monuments, all its signs of life and greatness, its endless gardens, stretching out towards the silent Lucchese mountains which bound the western horizon.

Here when the sun is setting with all that gorgeous colouring that can scarcely be seen out of Italy, those undulations seem crowned by a golden aureole that insensibly brings back to the mind a passage in Sacred History, and we appear to be gazing actually upon the Mount of the Transfiguration. Imagination will almost trace the outlines of three forms, of which one possesses all the beauty of the human, all the majesty of the Divine. Upon that brow, "laden with sorrow and acquainted with grief," the mysterious words *ECCE HOMO* seem to shine out in characters of fire. We close our eyes and almost fancy we hear that Voice from Heaven that has been silent for nearly nineteen centuries; and when we open them again, the aureole has faded and the vision has passed, and we come back to earth: that world, lost for a time, redeemed for ever.

Once more we had wandered through the uneven streets, and visited the sculpture galleries and art studios; we had gazed again upon Dante's house, and imagined the grave, laurel-crowned head haunting the rooms and corridors, issuing from the modest doorway, treading the quiet thoroughfares. We had crossed the Ponte Vecchio for the last time, with its quaint houses and shops displaying their rich turquoises, blue and soft as the blue skies above. And we had paid our last visit to that wonderful cemetery, which almost makes us in love with death; which is rich in possessing that one tomb, and was especially endeared to one of us by the small grave with its brief record of a young and lovely life cut down, a soul reclaimed by the angels.

It was all over; and with a reluctant farewell we passed away from the fair city and steamed northwards towards Milan.

We entered the city about five o'clock in the evening. The influence and scene of our lives had altogether changed. The

quietness and repose, almost desertion, of Florence had given place to the noise and all the unrest of Milan. From the first moment of entering it, our old dislike of the town returned. Its streets were noisy and rattling ; huge omnibuses and tramcars awoke unromantic thoughts and recollections. The people were hurrying to and fro, as if business was the end and aim of their lives. In the other cities of Italy this prosy atmosphere and element had been altogether absent. In Florence, Rome, Naples, Pleasure and Art seemed to go hand in hand, to form the object of existence. It had been very much of a dream existence, full of poetry and romance and the beau-ideal. Here Love held the harp of life, and the hour-glass of time ran in golden sands.

In Milan all seemed changed. We felt that Italy was passing away. We went back in imagination to our first days : the vineyards of Brindisi, the glowing skies above, the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean that washed its dazzling shores. We traced our upward journey through endless vineyards, where vine-wreathed peasants made love to each other and danced through life and the laughing hours. We saw again the Crescent Bay of Naples and Vesuvius sending forth her cruel tongues of flame in the dead of night. We remembered the matchless skies of Rome, all the glories of her past, the sadness and beauty of her present. And now, passing through the noisy streets of Milan, where romance has no home and repose is not, we mournfully took to heart the wisdom of the Eastern sage, and once more felt how true it is that : *This also must pass away.*

We also made a mistake in our hotel. Unfortunately for our own peace of mind, we "descended" at the Hotel Milan, and though it is no doubt excellent in many ways it was crowded and bustling. Here we threw all thoughts of repose to the winds. It was evidently the popular inn of the place : popular not with English, but with foreigners. The Italian and German element prevailed. The town was frightfully hot and close, the hotel seemed equally so.

We were just in time for table d'hôte, and it would be impossible to forget the feeling with which we sat down to it, after our quiet experiences of the past weeks. The room was long and narrow, and at the long tables there was hardly a seat to spare. Those present were the strangest mixture of people and costumes that could well be seen. A perfect Babel was going on that rose "like incense upon the air ;" and, also like incense, threatened to drive us out of the room again. We had a magnificent opportunity of studying the habits and manners of these people : we made the most of it and were not edified.

But if I said that we were not amused, it would be untrue. We were entertained from beginning to end. A good many of those present were Milanese. It was Sunday, and according to foreign customs they were indulging in their usual Sunday dinner at their

favourite inn. The waiters ran to and fro distracted, unable to respond to the pressure put upon them. The interval between each course was interminable ; the opportunity for studying human nature proportionate. The tongues of all nations seemed audible, and all seemed going at once. We had not been in an equal crowd since leaving the good old *Batavia*, and even there confusion had not reigned. The greatest excitement and the loudest laughter at the conjuring tricks which invariably accompanied dessert were quietness and repose compared with the scene to-night. The waiters waited in white gloves, and in their hurry every now and then dropped a plate with a crash ; and a little scream from a nervous female would rise upon the air above the Babel of sound—something like the cry of a storm-bird faintly heard above the raging of the gale—for who does not love poetical similes ?

But all things come to an end, and that dinner was no exception to the rule. Happily for us, for the heat was terrific and patience will not last for ever, any more than a running account that is never replenished. There was a sudden scraping of chairs and rising of forms. Here and there we heard the word "*Mahlzeit!*" pronounced, and noticed various small groups evidently from the Vaterland shaking hands with a grip worthy of gorillas. If nothing else had declared them German, the loud, throaty, guttural voices and the high cheek-bones would have done so. They might have gone through the world without further passport to testify to their nationality.

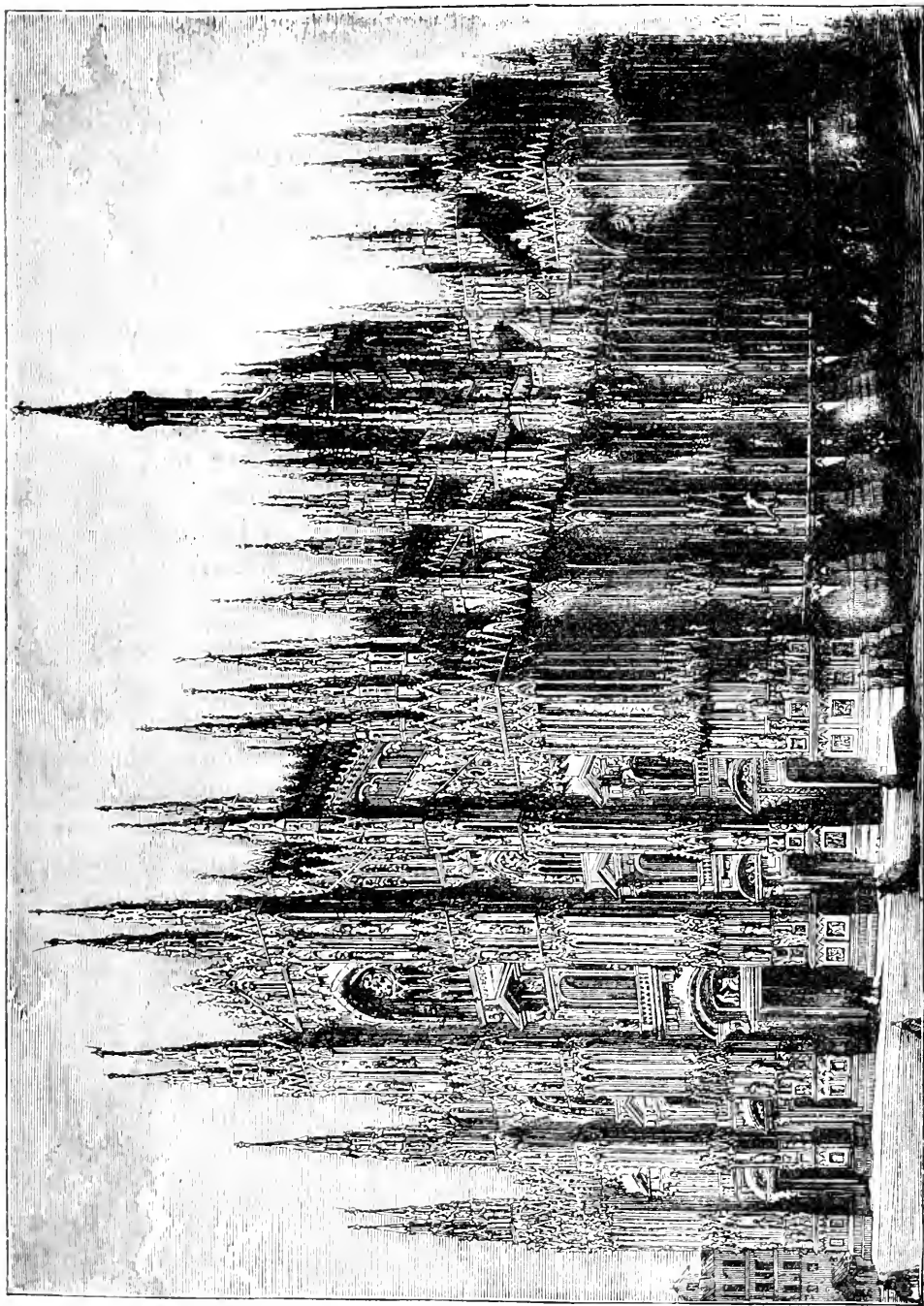
And then most of them exchanged one scene of dissipation for another. They needed further refreshment, accompanied by the soothing influence of tobacco. The fragrance of the foreign weed is doubtful, but its capacity for producing strong, suffocating, stupefying smoke is unrivalled. Most of them retired to a large room or hall or over-ground cellar—I hardly know what to call it—devoted to Bacchus. Perhaps a winter garden would appropriately describe the scene. It is not more contradictory and misleading than many other terms given to things, places and people. The usual winter garden is intensely hot, the tropical atmosphere is distinguished by a purple haze which puts one in mind of mountains and early morning in Sunny Climes ; graceful creepers and spreading palms and brilliant flowers delight the eye.—What can be more like summer ?

Into such a retreat the noisy Babel at the Hotel Milan retired.

Very soon every small table was occupied ; smoke wreathed about brows that certainly would never be adorned by any other wreath ; coffee and liqueur and lager beer were the order of the hour ; and in some cases the transition from coffee to beer was momentary. Of what material are the good Germans made ?

The whole scene reminded me of Huth's Keller on a large scale ; Huth's Keller, which I was wont to frequent occasionally when a boy in the good old University-Conservatorium town of Leipzig : fre-

quented—ça va sans dire—for the sake of studying human nature : just as H. C. in Majorca studied the graceful Mallorquinas at their devotions merely for the sake of pose and effect in his artistic studies.



MILAN CATHEDRAL

In the case of the present writer, Huth's Keller served two good purposes : it was a relief from the monotony of dry reading during the day and relaxed the mind ; and it proved, by this same observation of human nature, hat too much frequenting of Huth's

Kellers ends in vanity and vexation of spirit, a weariness of the flesh. On the other hand, if such wise and philosophical experiences are not learned in youth, they can hardly be acquired when

“ The glow of early youth declines in feeling’s dull decay.”

Or, at least, ought not to be.

But this Huth’s Keller in Leipzig possessed a charm altogether absent from the Milan Keller. It was full of poetry and romance, even though it was frequented by noisy students often out at elbows and light of pocket ; poor in everything except youth and health, and inexhaustible spirits—those heritors of the world ; full of poetry and romance in spite of the “bocks” of beer that were for ever being drawn and drunk, and sundry and most indigestible suppers that occasionally adorned a small table and sent forth a savoury odour strongly suggestive of the fragrant garlic.

For it was here that Faust and Mephistopheles met and fraternized, and entered into unholy compacts ; and the walls had been rendered majestic by the presence of Goethe ; and possibly Faust and Marguerite may have visited the Keller, and sat there quaffing the rich Rhine wine, hand locked in hand, eyes looking into eyes. And if Faust was chivalrous as well as gallant, and if he knew anything of a certain poet, he would whisper to her :

“ Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine ;
Leave but a kiss within the cup,
And I’ll ne’er ask for wine ! ”

Youth and beauty on one side and on the other, what a heritage it is, what a delight. But beware ! *It also shall pass away.* There are such things as Dead Sea Fruit ; and we know what was the end of Faust. Have we not all seen him go down the trap-door, the flames ascending ? and have we not all secretly wiped away a tear, and wished it might have been otherwise ? But it cannot be ; the Wise Preacher has told us so.

But I don’t know why I have committed the indiscretion of rambling off to good old Leipzig, when we ought to be discoursing sweet things about Milan. It must be because my pen has only impressions and memory to work upon. I am not clever enough, or I am too indolent, to take notes ; it is a physical impossibility. I once bought a dozen school copy-books when I was going away for a short holiday, and said, “ Now I will take copious notes and write a real book of Travels.”

I began :—

“ Monday morning. A lovely morning. The sun rose at six. The wind is shifting about. *Shifting as the Wind* is a very good proverb. All proverbs are not equally true. I believe we shall have a change of weather. *Uncertain as the Weather* is a proverb

only surpassed by *Shifting as the Wind*. We breakfasted this morning at the usual hour."

At that moment (we were on board ship) the bell rang for Tiffin, and there was a general clearing of decks—for as yet the sea was calm and amiable. When I returned and read over my "Diary," the mind invigorated and the judgment cleared by a glass of excellent Beaune, I sadly felt that I had mistaken my vocation; the twelve copy-books went into the sea; I never again attempted to take notes. I never shall.

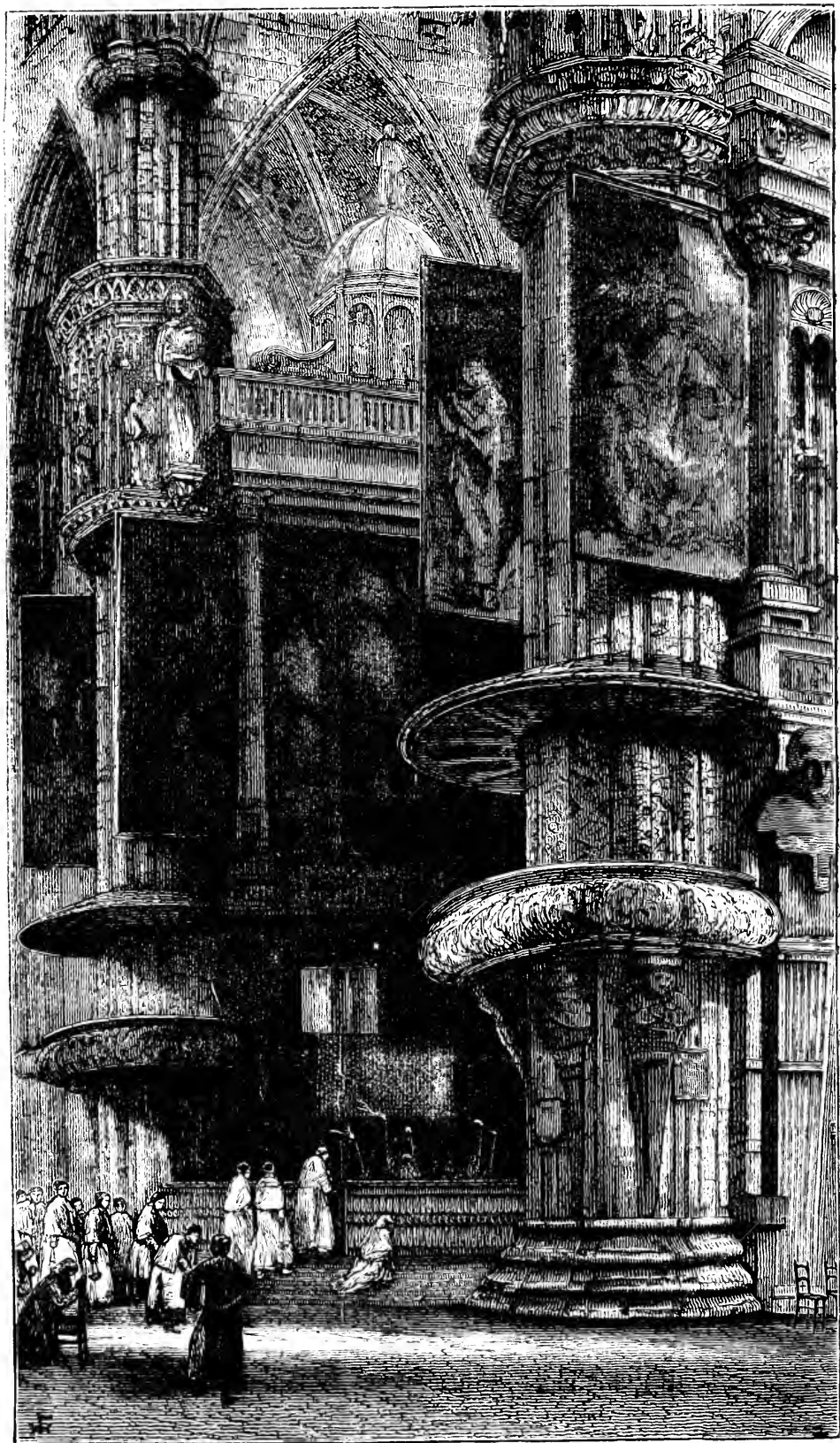
And my impression of that Hotel-Milan-Keller was decidedly German. Anything less Italian could not be conceived. The blue skies of the country, the laughing valleys, the sunny plains, the fertile and picturesque vineyards, the interesting peasantry with their flashing eyes and handsome features and fine forms—all our delightful experiences and impressions for the moment seemed blotted out.

We went into the town. Darkness had fallen; lights gleamed from the windows of the tall houses. The streets echoed to the sound of many footsteps.

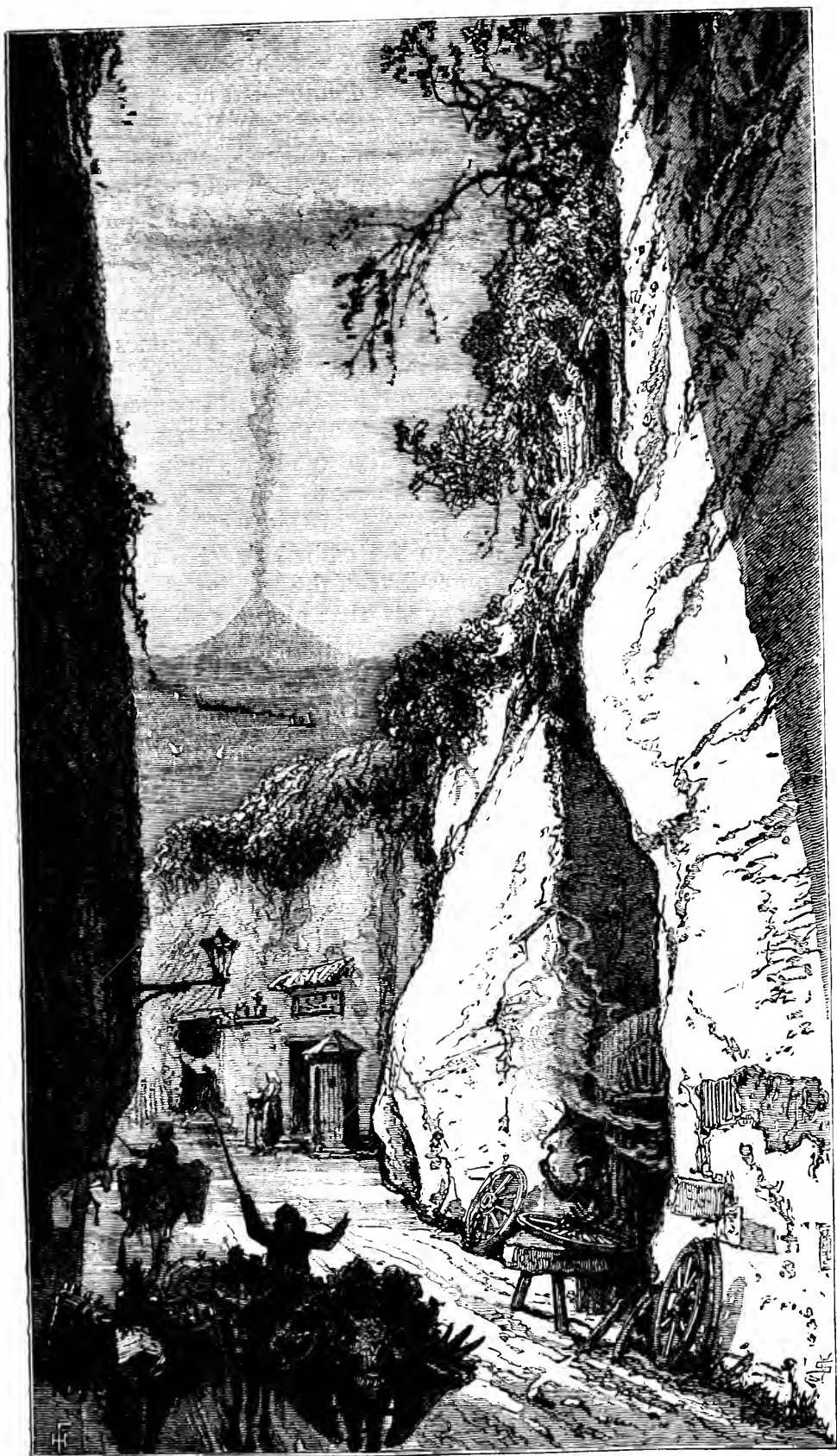
We wandered on to the Piazza di Scala, and found it crowded. A military band was playing, and playing wonderfully well. We sat with our backs to the monument of Leonardo da Vinci, and listened enraptured. Not only was the Piazza crowded, but so were most of the surrounding windows. At the corner was the Palazzo del Marino, and some soldiers at the barred windows, habited in white, looked as if they had been unwillingly disturbed from slumber. It was, however, nothing but their ordinary, undress, airy fairy costume. Other white and mysterious figures appeared at another window, and we wondered whether it was the general costume of the town, until in this instance the Italian equivalent for the word "confectioner" solved the enigma.

It was a curious scene. The lights in the square lighted up the faces at the open windows and glared upon those that were closed. It might almost have been a scene in Pandemonium; only that there they would scarcely have had such delightful music. The sky overhead was intensely dark, for clouds had gathered and neither stars nor moon gave their light. The band was at one end of the Piazza, the portico of the famous La Scala theatre at the other. It was closed, for the winter season had not commenced. Between the pieces, the crowd walked about and talked and gesticulated. All this was new to us. We were coming back to another world.

When the music was all over, the people scattered, the windows were deserted, lights were put out, the Piazza was left to solitude. The portico of La Scala was in darkness and gloom. The doors were closed; silence reigned. We pictured in imagination the brilliant crowd that from time to time had passed through those portals: heads crowned with the vanishing coronet of rank or royalty, or the immortal wreath of fame. If suddenly summoned to pass in



INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL, MILAN.



A LAST LOOK AT VESUVIUS FROM POSILIPO.

procession, what a wealth of pageantry, what a pomp of power would be there. For how many crowned and coroneted heads have listened within those walls to the world's sweet nightingales, but who, alas, like more ordinary mortals, are Time's subjects, and with the swift rolling of the relentless stream, seem to flash out gloriously for a season and disappear almost as rapidly as the feathered monarchs of the air.

The next morning the garish light of day put sentiment to flight. "The next morning" is generally a wholesome influence. It finds imagination under the full control of reason. Ofttimes it brings repentance and reflection; it forms good resolutions which are not always kept, and which help to form that time-worn pavement that, it is to be feared, is only too well-worn. For the world is full of pilgrims, though all are not travelling in search of the same shrine.

Yet if the next morning put sentiment to flight, there was much in Milan to restore the feeling.

Our first visit was naturally to the cathedral. No one who has seen it can forget his first impressions of the wonderful building. If the skies are blue and the day sunny, that glorious vision, that blaze of dazzling white marble thrown out into lights and shadows by the glowing sunshine, will remain in the memory for ever. It is an unrivalled picture. No other cathedral is quite like it. Whatever exception may be taken to the architecture of the west front—about to be remodelled and restored—as you enter the Piazza del Duomo, and the white, richly-decorated mass, and the wide flight of steps suddenly open into view, you feel that you are gazing upon a scene of another world; a building never raised to such perfection by human hands.

But the men of a by-gone age were greater than the men of to-day. They were capable of more sustained efforts. We owe our greatness to invention, which is due as much to accident as the power of thought. We are finding out the secrets of the unseen and the supernatural: drawing ourselves, as it were, within the confines of the spiritual world: until, by and by, the human will have become absorbed in the divine, time will have glided into eternity; and so, perhaps, the great change will come upon us all more gradually and insensibly than we think for:

It was a lovely morning, and it was a grand and glorious sight. We stood at the further end and gazed across. The white building, imposing and majestic as ever, glistened in the sunshine. The broad steps leading up to the great portals seemed an invitation to enter paradise. We watched a few dark-robed figures gliding in like silent shadows. There, at least, would be found absolute repose, retirement from the world, a religious atmosphere soothing to the labouring and the heavy laden; all the grandeur and dignity of long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults, appealing to the senses, elevating to the mind.

No wonder that the Milanese have proudly called it the eighth wonder of the world. It is the third largest church in Europe: St. Peter's at Rome standing first, the cathedral at Seville second. It is cruciform in shape, like so many of the cathedrals, and the interior impresses you by its vastness, height and grandeur. It is supported by fifty-two pillars, each twelve feet in diameter. Yet so large is the space that they seem in no way to obstruct the general view. In Cologne—to compare the two buildings for a moment: Milan is said to have been modelled upon the lines of the German cathedral—the pillars are so numerous that you seem to be gazing through a forest of stone-work. The effect is beautiful, but also obstructing. In a dense forest you cannot “see the wood for the trees;” here you are in danger of losing the cathedral for the sake of the pillars.

It is not so in Milan—which, by the way, is dedicated to *Mariæ Nascenti*; but *Nôtre Dame* plays so conspicuous a part in the religion of Rome that any other dedication seems the exception to the rule. The summits of the pillars, in place of capitals, are formed of niches containing statues. Richness of decoration, elaboration of detail have been crowded to excess upon this wonderful building. The Milanese seem to have determined to outvie all others in the world, and it is not probable that any other will ever approach it in wealth of sculpture and ornamentation. The pavement is mosaic of different-coloured marbles. Looking upward, the ceiling is painted in imitation of perforated stone-work; a decoration frequently seen in Italy, and too often so clumsily done that the effect is disastrous. But the churches of Italy, as a rule, are gaudy, flimsy, and debased in architecture.

The interior of the cathedral is 159 yards long, and 61 yards wide; and the nave is 159 feet high. The dome is 220 feet high, the tower 360. The small pamphlet sold at the entrance to the staircase leading to the roof gives you these details in English, which may be taken as a dictionary of a new language and a model of obscurity. The interior has double aisles, and a transept flanked with aisles.

You enter by the great west doorway, between two immense columns of granite from the celebrated quarries of Baveno. Immediately beyond the doorway, stretching the whole width of the cathedral, is a brass band indicating the line of the meridian. A solemn silence reigns in the immense building. A few far-off figures kneeling before a shrine look almost lost in space. Candles burning before some altar, offerings of propitiation to a saint, glimmer like distant stars. There is a certain dim religious light over all; yet it is sunlight itself compared with the obscurity of the Spanish churches.

The distant choir is deserted as you enter; but even whilst you gaze, a small procession of priests and acolytes wends its way from

the south sacristy and ascends the steps of the high altar. The forms of priests and boys are quite faint and shadowy ; in their dresses they look picturesque, appealing to the sight and senses. Seen from a distance, all sound lost, the human element softened, the gold and tinsel subdued, it is certainly dignified and impressive. And presently, gazing upwards, from a corona suspended from the roof by an interminable chain there suddenly rises a burst of flames, as if something had taken fire. It burns fiercely, and you are startled for a moment as you think the building in jeopardy ; until it dies out as suddenly as it arose, and you learn that it is a ceremony which takes place every year to commemorate the martyrdom of St. Swithin or some other saint, who forfeited his life at the stake.

Presently you wend your way to the right, and at a table is a custodian who sells the wonderful and fearful descriptive pamphlet of the cathedral, and for a small fee admits you to the staircase leading to the roof. Before ascending, you notice the door of the south sacristy, with its amazingly rich Gothic decoration. Then you begin to ascend the winding stone staircase to the roof, which staircase ought to be better kept than it is. The visit must of necessity be paid, for the roof is the gem of the cathedral. It seems almost a pity to have spent so much time and labour and wealth upon a portion of the building so far above the level of the world : but then at the same time it is above the vulgar level of mankind.

You ascend, and through the loopholes see the town and the houses gradually diminishing, until you reach the roof and are glad that the first stage is over.

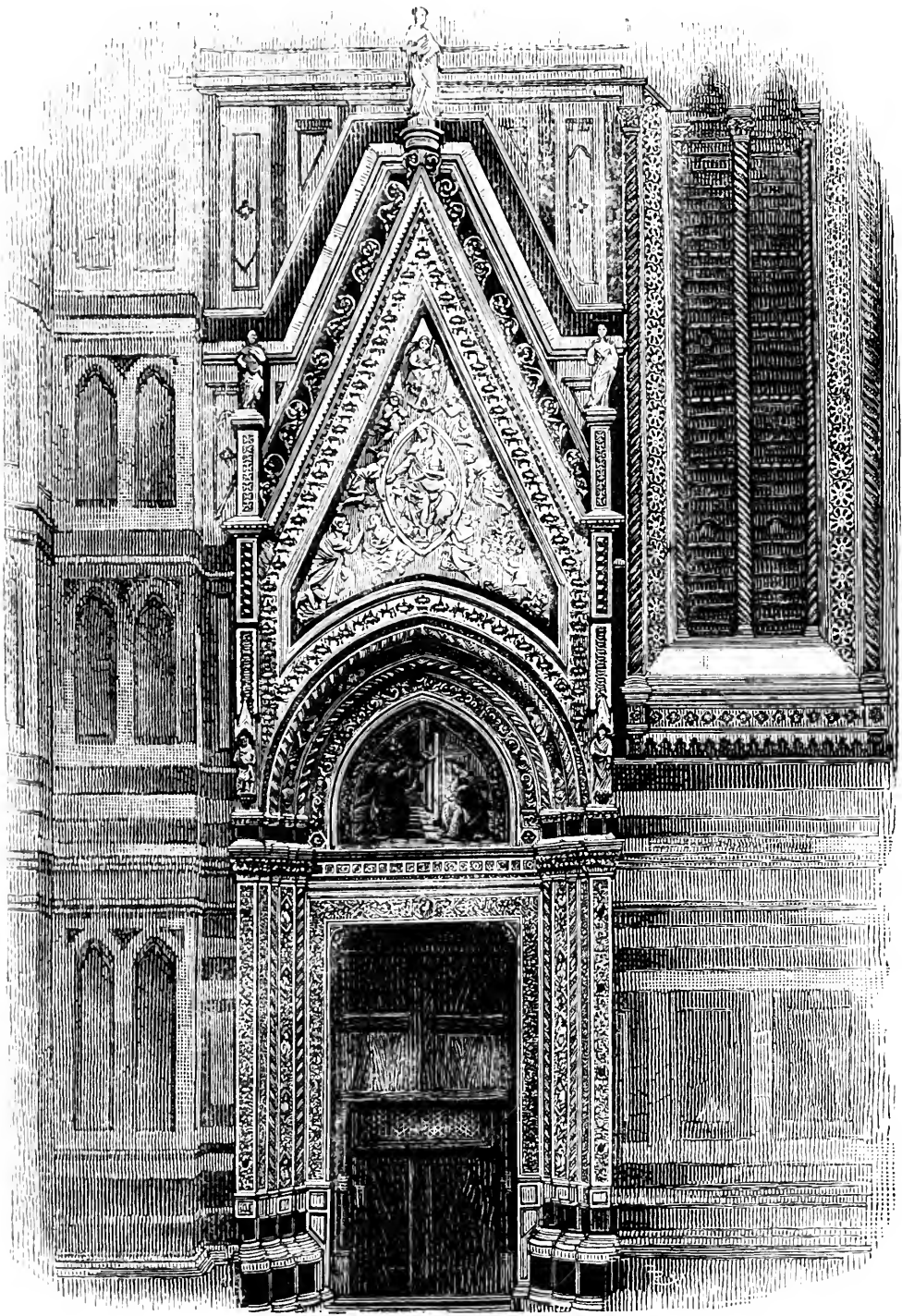
You are amazed at the sight which meets the eye. The roof possesses 98 Gothic turrets and 2,000 statues in marble, all beautifully and elaborately carved. The turrets are rich in detail, their light and airy shafts pointing upwards with all the elegance and refinement of which Gothic architecture is capable ; the blue sky showing through much open fretwork with an effect which makes you feel as if you were gazing at some rich lace-work or tracery.

Then you ascend the tower and you look down upon all this wonderful roof, this amazing wealth of sculpture, and take it all in at a glance. The roof itself is divided into sections, and you can only see a portion of it at a time until you have risen above it.

On all sides of you is one of the most wonderful views in the world. Stretching far away are the rich Plains of Lombardy : especially fertile in corn, wine, fruit, rice, olives, and the cultivation of the silkworm. The plains are watered by many rivers, amongst them the Sesia, the Tesin, the Adda, the Oglio, and the Po. This former Duchy of Italy is rich in water, for it also possesses the lakes Maggiore, Como, and Lugano. Milan itself is watered by the rivers Adda and Tesin.

In the early morning, when the distance is not veiled by mist, the

view is scarcely to be surpassed, either in beauty or extent. The Alps in the distance rear their giant heads, reaching as it seems into the



A FLORENTINE DOORWAY.

heavens, their outlines melting into the pale blue of the sky. To the south-west there are Monte Viso and Mont Cenis, and nearer Turin,

the beautiful Superga. The Matterhorn is conspicuous; Monte Leone near the Simplon, and the Bernese Alps; in the far distance the summits of the St. Gothard and the Splugen, the peak of the Ortler. In the east may be faintly discerned, by the help of a telescope, the towers and domes of quiet Pavia, ancient capital of the Goths and Lombards, backed by the far-famed Apennines.

This country of Lombardy, now consisting of eight provinces, was once of much greater extent. It inherits its name from the Germanic tribe that invaded Italy in the sixth century. Twelve centuries before this it was under the dominion of the Etruscans, those mysterious people of whom so little is really known. The Etruscan language can still be traced in the derivations of many of the words now used by the Milanese.

Milan itself was the centre of the country, and the wide plains surrounding it were then, as now, rich in all manner of fruit and corn and wine.

Gradually the Lombardy kingdom fell away and diminished. Its richness and beauty made it a constant object and envy in days when the desire for possession was a sufficient excuse for war, and appropriation fell to the most powerful. From the fifteenth century down to the middle of the eighteenth, one province after another was seized by the avaricious lords of Piedmont; until to-day Lombardy proper consists only of that tract of country lying between the Alps and the Po. The Ticino separates it from Piedmont; the Mincio from Venetia.

It is a fertile paradise. The climate is hot and dry. The meadows often yield as many as twelve crops in the year, vegetation going on both in winter and summer. From hence comes the famous Parmesan cheese. The silk culture is carried on extensively, and the mulberry tree is found throughout the country. Its fruit, however, ripens too quickly, and though abundant, is scarcely as luscious as the best fruit of our English trees. But almost all English fruit bears off the palm for flavour and beauty; it comes more slowly and therefore more surely to perfection.

It was about two centuries before the Christian era that the Romans turned their thoughts to the country beyond the Po, and very soon the Plains of Lombardy became the great Italian stronghold of these conquerors of the world. In the fourth century, Milan itself was already larger than Rome, and in some respects of greater importance. It was an imperial residence, and St. Ambrose in the year 374 here founded a church which gave no allegiance to the Papal See of Rome.

The Goths, succeeded by the Lombards, made Pavia their capital. These, after two centuries of reign, were overthrown by Charlemagne in 774. Lombardy then fell to the Franconian and afterwards to the German kings.

Then came the quarrel between the emperor and the pope, which

divided Italy into two factions: the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. Milan was the head-quarters of the former, Cremona of the latter.

In 1284 Visconti was appointed Governor of Lombardy. He and his descendants extended the Duchy as far as Pisa and Bologna. Giovanni Galeazzo, the last of the Viscontis, was about to be crowned King of Italy, when in 1402 he died of the plague. Francesco Sforza then ascended the throne, and for a time Lombardy was given over to all the horrors of despotism.

It was only at the close of the 15th century that Charles VIII. of France invaded Naples and a new order of things set in for Italy. But the new order was not to mean peace and quietness. Italy has ever been a bone of contention amongst all European nations: too often their battle-field. Ludovico, revolting against France, was defeated and died in a French dungeon—one of the most terrible of fates in those, as in later days.

In 1525 came the battle of Pavia, when Charles V. became the controller of Italy. In 1535 he presented his son Philip II. with the Duchy of Milan. Early in the 18th century the Spanish rule was followed by the Austrian. Four times in that century the French occupied Milan, and then came the reign of Napoleon. He annexed the whole of Piedmont, Genoa, Parma, Tuscany and Rome to France; and there might have been no limit to his power but for the formation of a separate kingdom of Italy, comprising Lombardy, Venice, S. Tyrol, Istia, Emilia, and the Marches. Of this, Milan was the capital and Napoleon was king, but reigned by proxy in the person of his stepson, Eugène Beauharnais. In 1815 the Austrian supremacy was again restored, but came to an end in the insurrection of 1848. Finally, at the Peace of Zurich, in 1859, Lombardy was given over to Napoleon III., and by him was ceded to Sardinia.

All this chapter, or succession of chapters, in the world's history passes before one in vivid mental review when gazing from the heights of the tower of Milan Cathedral. Beautiful as the scene is, it adds to it all the charm of history. You see in imagination the plains covered with marching armies; you hear the trumpet sounding to war, the beat of countless horses upon the ground. The flash from shield and sword and helmet eclipses the sun; the earth trembles as foe meets foe in deadly encounter. The centuries roll on, and still the plains present a warlike scene, still the bugle calls to battle, and the red blood dyes the earth, and the waters of the rivers seem to blush with sorrow; and smoke from the cannon's mouth ascends in clouds and cries to heaven for a hastening of the time when wars shall be no more: when the living shall cease to mourn for "the young, the fair, the brave" left cold and dead upon the battle-field.

This fair cathedral is a fitting gem to crown this famous city of Milan; to rise in glory and splendour in the centre of these vast historical plains. From the summit of the tower the view seems limitless, and the far-off mountains are dream pictures. There is a

world beyond, but the world here visible to the eye seems sufficient for all happiness and ambition.

Wethought so as we gazed upon it all that day. It was indeed a glorious view, on which the sun shone resplendently. Here one breathed also ; in the streets of Milan the heat and closeness had been almost unbearable. It always seems so in Milan. But I gazed alone. Mauleverer on reaching the roof had been seized with sudden faintness, and staggering to a seat declared he could go no higher. The weaker man triumphed over the stronger, and went on alone. It was reversing the order of things.

Then we came back to earth, or rather to the interior of the cathedral, which seemed more full of repose than ever after the dazzling splendours of roof and tower, whilst the eye met the subdued light with every sense of relief.

It is impossible to visit Milan without feeling that it has had a very important past and possesses a very prosperous present. It has 22 gates, a university, several colleges, a matchless cathedral, 230 churches, many palaces, 90 convents, 100 religious fraternities and many hospitals. Its convents and monasteries are of course chiefly things of the past.

Of late years it has wonderfully improved. In the production of art it takes the highest rank, and its sculptors are rapidly becoming some of the most famous in the world. The old part of the town, with its narrow, irregular streets, is picturesque, though rather given over to an aspect of gloom and poverty. It is enclosed by canals, which, however, bear none of the charms of those of Venice, or even of picturesque Holland. There are very few traces left of the rule of the Romans : and it is in this, as in every other respect, a direct contrast to the Eternal City. Both Bramante and Leonardo da Vinci lived here in the latter part of the fifteenth century and early in the sixteenth. Leonardo da Vinci's famous *Last Supper* is still the pride of Milan. No painting has been more reproduced.

Passing through the old town, along the banks of the melancholy canals, we at length reached the somewhat remote church of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

It is an abbey church dating from the fifteenth century, of which nothing remains of the original but the Gothic nave. The interior is gloomy but interesting ; the choir, transept and dome are attributed to Bramante, and are carried out in the Renaissance style.

Close to the church is the refectory of the original monastery of S. Maria delle Grazie, now turned into cavalry barracks. Here, on the wall at the further end of the refectory, is the famous fresco. But Time has laid his pitiless hand upon it, and little beyond outline now remains. Expression and colouring have both faded.

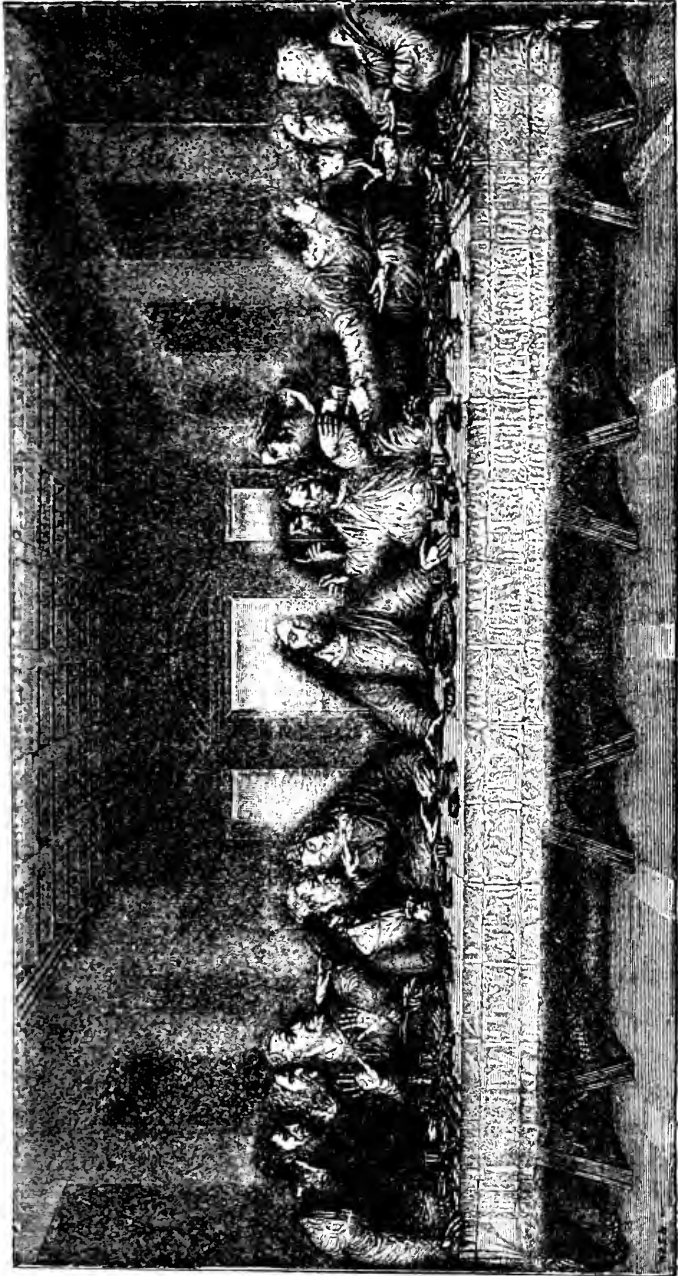
Sufficient, however, is still visible to prove how great must once have been the beauty of colouring and grouping, the dignity of the conception, the simple majesty of the Divine Figure. The painting

sacred subjects is amongst the lost arts, like so much else that is lost to us. It is folly to attempt it in these days. The religious atmosphere of those early times seems to have evaporated. The influence has passed out of men's minds. The men and the moods of Fra Angelico's type died with the Middle Ages. The reverence for work and subject which induced him to paint kneeling would in these days be looked upon as eccentricity or a mania, or even fanaticism.

The moment the great artist has taken for his subject is just after the Saviour has said, "One of you shall betray Me." Sorrow and resignation are seen in His bowed head, consternation and dismay on the faces of most of His followers. Nothing but a view of the original can give an idea of its religious tone and beauty. The reproductions are carried out in the modern spirit; the divine element is wanting.

It is an endless pity that, painted in oils, time and atmosphere should so far have destroyed the picture; but of what remains the Milanese may well be proud.

Not far from this is the very quaint and curious church of S. Ambrogio, founded by St. Ambrose in the 4th century. It wa

*Leonardo da Vinci.*

THE LAST SUPPER.

this church that so long maintained its independence of the popes, already alluded to. The church was founded on the ruins of a Temple of Bacchus : which thing is an allegory, and as it should be : darkness giving place to light ; Paganism to Christianity. The church as it now exists dates from the 12th century. It is Romanesque in form ; the interior has become uneven, and is shrouded in gloom. The carving is very quaint and grotesque, and a few of the designs are heathenish and hideous.

In front of the church is a very quaint and curious atrium of the 9th century, adorned with arcades, ancient tombstones, inscriptions and frescoes of the 12th century. Tradition has it that these are the gates St. Ambrose closed against Theodosius after the Massacre of Thessalonica.

The kings of Lombardy and the German emperors were crowned here with the celebrated iron crown. This crown is now preserved in the cathedral at Monza. It is enclosed in a casket forming the centre of a magnificent cross over the high altar. It was last used at the Coronation of Charles V., of Napoleon in 1805, and of Ferdinand I., in 1838. It is made of a hoop of gold studded with precious stones, lined with a thin strip of iron said to have been made from a nail of the true Cross, brought by the Empress Helena from Palestine.

There are many churches in Milan, but none more interesting than St. Ambrose or S. Maria delle Grazie. S. Lorenzo is the oldest, is octagon in shape and covered with a dome. Its origin is doubtful. It is uncertain whether the interior formed the principal hall of a palace of Maximilian, or was a Christian place dating from the earlier centuries.

There are many other points of interest in Milan, so that it is not all given up to business and the greed of gain. Even if it were so, it would be easily explained as simply the usual result of cause and effect. The country around, far and wide, is rich, fertile, well cultivated. It may be called the orchard of Italy and is highly prosperous. Those who are fortunate enough to live under its smiles, basking in its sunshine, receive its favours.

All this reacts upon the town, which is well-built and increasing. Some of its streets are wide, its houses imposing. It has the finest arcade in the world, the Galleria Vittorio Emmanuolo. It is built in the form of a Latin cross, is 320 yards long, 16 yards wide and 94 feet high. The centre is an octagon and the cupola above it is 180 feet high. It consists of a series of shops and cafés, the best in Milan. Lighted up at night with its thousands of gas jets, it is really an imposing spectacle.

The picture gallery of Milan is a good one, containing fine examples of Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyck and Titian. It also contains Raphael's Marriage of the Virgin, the chief picture of the collection. It possesses a lovely Madonna by Sassoferrato, with the

delicate and exquisite colouring of this artist ; and near it is Rubens' Last Supper, with all Rubens' magnificence of colouring, but coarseness of work and conception. Compare it with the simple beauty and dignity, one might almost say the holiness, of Leonardo da Vinci's fresco, and the characters of the two men will at once be indicated.

Something must be yielded, however, to the difference of training, of influence, of country and climate. The strong, coarse breed of Flanders, the very tones of its powerful but guttural and mongrel language, must produce very different results from the soft and liquid accent of Italy, the refinement of its race, its enervating breezes. Here again we have cause and effect. Eagles do not breed sparrows, nor can grapes grow upon thorns.

The time drew near for saying good-bye to Milan. It was the only place we were leaving without reluctance. In every other instance there had been a drawing back of the spirit ; an unwillingness to separate from these fairest scenes of earth. Even in dilapidated, uninteresting, somewhat poverty-stricken Brindisi the feeling had been present. For Brindisi was washed by the blue transparent waters of the Mediterranean. The gentle ripples upon the dazzling white shores plashed and murmured with a soothing sound that seemed to woo one to remain there for ever. The mind relaxed into that *dolce-far-niente* condition, which, however unhealthy for a continuance, is delightful, nay, invigorating, when it comes as an interlude to the stern realities of life.

But in leaving Milan we had no regret. We were even glad to bid it farewell. The town seemed so full of unrest, the air so stifling, so enervating, that life became almost a weariness to the flesh, and a lassitude fell upon the mind which was altogether different from the lotos-eating impression produced by the sweet waters of the Levant. In the one case it had been pleasure, exquisite pleasure ; in the other it was pain. So it always is in life ; the twin genii that go hand in hand :

" Never divided, where one can enter
Ever the other doth entrance gain."

Our lives resemble the famous Eastern riddle, that was to have been fatal, but was not so : our days are like the tree of Time, whose leaves are alternately black and white. If we have day, we must also have night.

Yet in saying farewell to Milan, we were saying farewell to Italy ; we were breaking the last link binding us to sunny climes. Time was up. A certain party at a shooting box in Scotland was growing impatient for its host ; we had exceeded our limits.

It is a mistake to go to these sunny climes with *any* limit. The perfection of travelling, the height of bliss, is to feel that we may rest on our oars and take our ease ; that the passing days and hours are not too rapidly bringing us to a foregone conclusion, a fatal given

moment. Let that moment remain in uncertainty, amongst the mysteries of the future; to be decided by fate or circumstance. We may not linger one day longer under these balmy skies, within these soft and sunny climes than we should otherwise have done; but the very uncertainty of the future, our very freedom of action, will make all the difference to our happiness. We are creatures of impression, of fancy and imagination; we cannot get out of this; try as we will, we cannot, we never shall, change our nature. Probably it is not to be desired. Our greatest earthly pleasures frequently come from the anticipation of things that are never destined to exist: and it is imagination that gives virtue to even our most ardently desired, most completely fulfilled wishes.

So we started without great sorrow one sunny afternoon for a long unbroken journey up to Paris.

The train steamed out of the station and we turned our backs upon Italy. Night had fallen when we reached Turin, where we halted just long enough to avail ourselves of the limited buffet with its unlimited charges. But in this respect it is no worse perhaps than other buffets, English or Foreign.

We passed through Piedmont. In due time we rumbled and rolled through the long Mont Cenis tunnel, devoutly wishing for Modane, where we were to find a sleeping-carriage. Once more it was the pleasures of anticipation only. At Modane the officials were cold, indifferent, disobliging. Of sleeping-cars they had none; we must make the best of what existed. We bargained for a carriage to ourselves, and made it as comfortable as circumstances permitted: consoling each other with the remembrance that in all misfortunes there is always a yet deeper depth.

In the present instance, the failure of a sleeping-carriage was almost a boon, for we passed through all the lovely country of Savoie, and it was a rare experience. All its beauties and grandeur were visible; nothing was lost excepting detail.

Its grandeur indeed was heightened by the darkness. It all looked inexpressibly solemn and solitary. The mountains reared their heads, exaggerated by the gloom; ponderous, mysterious masses. In the skies above the stars flashed and scintillated. We hurried through wild passes and ravines, beside foaming, frothy torrents. We could almost feel the spray upon our faces; the air would grow cold and chill as we rushed onwards.

I remembered the days, not so long ago, when I had sojourned, not so far off, in the very heart of the Alps, at an old and quaint château, where in the midst of summer the "crackling faggot" burnt upon the hearth and the sparks flew upwards as surely as man is born to trouble; and myriads of nightingales sang night and day, night and day, and never ceased; and one never tired of the strain, which seemed to haunt one's very dreams like an undercurrent of celestial melody. The recollection was mixed with visions of

Rousseau and Les Charmettes, the Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, midnight masses, and the good old monks who looked as if they rose from their graves for the occasion and went back to them when mass was over : each one departing with his lantern like a sepulchral Diogenes.

But memory might never cease recalling past scenes and events, re-awakening happy moments gone for ever ; buried for ever in the womb of time, even as some of those who contributed to the happiness of those days have passed into the silent land of shadows.

And to-night the shadows began to creep as we went onwards ; and presently a faint, very faint glimmering in the east announced that dawn was breaking. The advent of another day, and, to us, return to an old world. We had left behind us the blue skies, the sunny climes of Italy.

"Au revoir sans adieu !" cried Mauleverer, looking towards the south. "Some day I shall return and settle for good in those sunny climes. And you shall spend six months out of every twelve with me. We will sail upon the blue waters of the Mediterranean in white-winged boats ; we will dream dreams upon the seashore ; we will have a villa upon the hill-side, and surround ourselves with gorgeous blooms and smiling vineyards ; peacocks shall spread their tails upon our terraces, and perfumed fountains shall scent the air and charm the senses. I will cease to be prosy and practical, and become all poetry and imagination. And the hours shall be laughing and the days too short, and life shall last for ever and youth shall be eternal."

"And all this may be," I laughed : "or something equally good ; but we must wait for yet sunnier climes than these."

And perhaps those celestial realities are the only anticipations that will bring us neither regret nor disappointment ; whose fulfilment will exceed all the kingdoms of the earth and their glories. In the meantime, many of the beauties of these sunny climes of earth are a foretaste of Paradise. It is a privilege to know them, a delight to sojourn amidst them ; for they are a holy and wholesome influence, raising the heart and mind of man upwards to the everlasting shores.



DIVIDED.

BY KATHERINE CARR.



CHAPTER IX.

GOOD-BYE!

NOW that the die was cast, both husband and wife felt that the sooner they parted the better; and Denise telegraphed to Madame Lenard the very morning after the crisis, telling her to expect her in Paris the following day. This did not allow much time for consideration, nor for two hot young tempers to cool; but under the circumstances perhaps delay was undesirable. They did not wish to disgrace themselves by further recriminations and undignified ebullitions of temper; and since cordiality was out of the question, they were reduced to a strained formality that would have approached the ludicrous in the eyes of an onlooker, though to the two actors in this little domestic tragedy the position was one of most acute misery.

Fortunately there was only one more day to spend together.

"Thank Heaven! to-morrow I shall be in Paris," Denise kept reminding herself. "No more dreary winters at Camper."

Yet even this welcome anticipation failed to lift the heavy weight of despondency from her spirits. The prospect of gaiety, and of once more living amongst congenial friends, no longer exhilarated her. In fact, if the truth were known, she felt like a naughty child who, after perpetrating some dire mischief, creeps home to receive condign punishment. She was ashamed of herself—that was the long and short of it: lamentably ashamed of herself. Was she such a termagant that it was impossible for a man to live at peace with her? What had become of her merry insouciance? her old sweetness of character? She used not to be so touchy. But of late she had lost all her light-heartedness and had fallen into wretched habits of morbid self-introspection and of useless regrets for things that were past and done with.

"Well, it is Raoul who is to blame," she told herself. "He ought not to have married me. I told him I did not love him; and I do not see how he could expect affection to grow out of nothing. Perhaps, if he had been patient I might in time have learnt to care for him. At all events, I would have done my best. But who ever heard of a man who had forbearance, or whose love was strong enough to combat the smallest difficulty or inconvenience? Love?

Ma foi ! it is not much they know about it. I daresay Raoul's has lasted longer than that of most men. But what is that ? It proves to me how wise I was *not* to fall in love with him, and so put myself in the false position of a woman whose husband has grown tired of her."

This feminine logic, plausible as it sounded, did not quite stifle certain officiously-meddlesome comments from her conscience, which Denise tried to disregard. As to the justice or injustice of her self-defence, that depended on the state of Raoul's feelings at the time, and they were not easily to be fathomed. Also, it is possible his partisans might maintain that he had ample excuse for ceasing to care for a woman who, as she confessed, had never even pretended to return his affection.

For our part, we think Denise argued with a woman's weak reasoning, and believe that if once Raoul could have shown himself to be completely her master instead of a devoted slave, he might even yet have won her respect and at last have succeeded in "taming her wild heart to his loving hand."

However, that chance being lost, nothing remained for them but for each to make the best of existing circumstances.

No doubt Denise, like so many of her sex in a similar position, would easily accommodate herself to a state of "grass widowhood." Whilst, on Raoul's side, probably no man finds great difficulty in resuming a bachelor's freedom, his affections being as a rule less strong and clinging than those of women.

What Raoul's private opinion was respecting this collapse of his married life, none could tell. He scarcely knew himself ; but spent the day after the crisis in a wild, unreasoning state, forcing himself by a strong effort of will to banish every thought of Denise, and ruthlessly thrusting back any "compunctious visitings of nature," that attempted to steal into his heart.

It was a stormy day. He was thankful for that—it suited his own feelings—and he was out all day ; whilst Denise crouched over the fire in the hall, longing to be able to shut her ears to the dismal shrieks and howls of the autumnal blasts that shook the rugged walls of the old Château.

"I should go melancholy mad if I lived here much longer," she thought. "So would any woman, with a husband who never comes near her from morning till night. He is so happy in his solitude that it does not strike him how dull and depressing it is for me."

A few months—even a few weeks ago—she knew well enough that it would have raised the poor fellow to the seventh Heaven for her to express the slightest desire for his society. She had done her best to drive him from her. But, now that she had succeeded, she was indignant with him for his want of perseverance. Alas ! of what inconsistencies is not a capricious woman capable ? It was nearly six o'clock before Raoul came home ; and then, instead of going

upstairs to dress for dinner, he came hurriedly into the hall where Denise was sitting.

"What an evening!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands over the fire, whilst the water oozed out in a little pool on the polished floor from his dripping clothes and boots. "It might be January. There is a tremendous sea; and several boats are expected in to-night. If you will excuse me from coming to dinner, I will run down to the village and see if I can be of any use. Monsieur le Curé will give me dinner."

"I will order something to be kept warm for you. You know M. le Curé keeps a perpetual fast," answered Denise, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "And you will be hungry when you come in."

"Oh, you need not take the trouble. I may not be home until late; perhaps not before the small hours of the morning. I enjoy being out in a storm. There is an *élan* about it that excites one. Besides, I have not slept well lately; and I would rather be up and stirring than lying in bed like a log, doing nothing."

"Do not run into danger. I have heard that you are more reckless than any sailor in the place. And—you ought to take some care of yourself."

"You think so? In truth, I do not see the necessity.—But, before I go, I wish to know if you have everything you need for your journey? I may not see you before you start," said Raoul, keeping his back turned to her, and nervously poking the fire with his heavy boot between his little jerky sentences. "I hope you will have a good time in Paris . . . You must write to me if you want anything . . . or if I can be of any use . . . or you wish to—to see me . . . or come back here. I think that is all I have to say. Is there anything you desire?"

"Thank you. Nothing," replied Denise, in an unnaturally high and lively tone.

She never could explain what came over her just then. Perhaps the tragi-comedy of the whole state of affairs struck her keen sense of humour at the very moment when she was also awaking to its solemnity, just as, at the most serious crisis of our lives, some insignificantly-grotesque thought will send us into a wild nervous convulsion of miserable laughter. At all events, for the first time in her life, Denise felt herself helplessly in the power of an hysterical fit of tears and laughter. The tears she *would* not shed—her pride saved her. But the laughter—often so much more agonizing than crying—could not be checked, and came over her with a rush. She realised the irrelevance and bad taste of her conduct; but that only made matters worse. And when, startled by the sudden outburst of weak and unprovoked mirth, Raoul turned upon her with a look of mingled astonishment and pain, she would have given all she possessed to be able to stop herself, the very trouble and dignity in his face increased the hysterical helplessness that had swept away

her self-control. The more she struggled to overcome it the more breathlessly she laughed, tears brimming over in her eyes, so that she only saw Raoul's figure in a confused mist.

"I do not know at what you are so amused," he said, half proudly, half sadly. "But it does not matter, if you are happy. Adieu. I hope you will find plenty of friends in Paris, and enjoy yourself.— Bon voyage."

She could not even force out a feeble adieu, for any effort to speak would have changed that terrible laughter into miserable and childish weeping; and before she could master herself Raoul had gone. A little later she saw him hurrying towards the village, clad from head to foot in mackintosh and evidently prepared for a hard night's work.

"What a fool I was!" she thought, letting the tears trickle down her cheeks on to her hands, now that he was gone and she could relieve her feelings unnoticed. "It must be the life I have been leading that has upset my nerves. The place does not agree with me; I am getting ill and weak. But, oh, I wish I had not done that. Poor fellow! He thought I was laughing at him and making fun of our troubles. I shall never forgive myself. He has been so much more dignified than I. Eh bien! it cannot be undone. After all, nothing can make much difference now and it is always better to laugh than to cry."

She dashed the tears from her eyes, and, standing up before the looking-glass over the fireplace, tried to compose her flushed and ruffled features. She had no intention of betraying the slightest sign of emotion before the servants, this last night of hers at Camper, and it was necessary to calm herself before submitting to old Gustave's inquisitorial gaze at dinner.

Even to an unsociable person, there is something namelessly depressing in a solitary meal. To Denise it was unbearable. She was not inclined to eat, but felt in duty bound to taste of every dish for fear of hurting the feelings of the ancient cook, who, for more than twenty years, had ministered to the inward wants of the de Kériadecs. The inquisitive solicitude of Gustave gave her the fidgets, and the consciousness that he was watching every mouthful made her bolt her food in an undignified fashion most injurious to the digestion. And when, after hurrying through delicacies to which Raoul would no doubt have done ample justice, she was free to make a retreat to the salon, it was still too early to think of going to bed, and time hung heavy on her hands.

She curled herself up in a chair close to the fire, and tried to become absorbed in her book. It happened to be one appropriate to the stormy night—Victor Hugo's "*Les Travailleurs de la Mer*," in which, on most occasions, she would have revelled. But this evening it was too suggestive of what might be going on near at hand. Its graphic descriptions thrilled her with a nameless dread

and horror, until at last she flung down the volume and began to pace nervously up and down the uncheerful room, with its stiff quaint furniture and faded yellow damask.

"What a horrible moan there is in the wind," she thought. "Even here, with the shutters closed, I can hear the roaring of the sea. How terrible to think of those poor fishermen—and their wives and children watching for them at home. It is detestable to be the only person in the place doing nothing, sitting up here in warmth and idle luxury. I wish I were a man. I should like to be out, like Raoul, working with them and fighting against the storm. And yet I should be afraid—terrified. What a coward I am! Even now, I shiver merely to think of it; every blast of the wind makes my heart stand still with fear. . . . I wonder if I could see anything from the tower. . . . and whether I have the courage to go up there? Bah! I will force myself to be brave. . . . just to show *myself* that I am not a nervous baby, but as bold as I used to be when I was Denise Lenard."

Without giving herself time to draw back, she ran quickly down the long corridor, at the end of which a door led on to the narrow spiral staircase in the Watch Tower. In her haste she had forgotten to bring a light, and as she stumbled up the dark irregular steps she was assailed by a hundred terrors. She imagined grim faces peering at her in the darkness, quick footsteps pattering after her up the steps. It was with infinite relief that she flung open the little door leading into the small octagon-shaped room at the summit of the tower, where the blessed beacon was kept burning all through the long dark nights. Once here her fears lessened, and pushing open the casement, she leant her head out and peered into the darkness.

What a hurricane! What a confusion of battling elements! Wind and sea raging in impotent rivalry, and all around, above and below, almost hidden by an inky blackness. The rain, pouring down in wild gusts, beat on the trees and splashed on the gravel walks; and a whirlwind of dead leaves went circling in mad dance through the storm.

At first Denise could distinguish nothing; but gradually, as her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, she began to discern signs of life: a moving mass of human beings on the beach far below, with here and there the glimmer of lanterns and torches; and suddenly a rift in the hurrying clouds let a watery gleam of moonlight fall for a moment over the scene.

That glimpse was enough. It revealed the boiling fury of the sea where a fishing vessel was reeling to and fro on the treacherous reefs, now raised above the waves, now heeling over, mast high, into the tossing foam. And, as Denise leant eagerly forward, it seemed to her that she could even hear the wild shriek of a human being, borne to her on the wings of storm.

Like all strong natures, Denise was braced and invigorated by actual danger. Ten minutes ago she had trembled at imaginary fears excited by the wind howling down the chimney and seen gruesome shapes and hobgoblins as she fled, like a child, up the dark staircase.

But now that a terrible reality presented itself, she did not hesitate for a moment to take part in it.

In an incredibly short space of time, for one who generally took twenty minutes to arrange a bonnet and veil, she had put on a warm coat and thick boots, and drawing a hood over her head (for it would have been impossible to keep on a hat), hurried out of the house through the shrubbery, where the swaying branches of the trees creaked above her as she passed, and then down the hill towards the cliff.

The wind blowing off shore drove her along at a pace that almost swept her from her feet, whilst the rain beat upon her as though furious at her audacity in venturing out of the house.

At any other time Denise would have declared it unfit for any human being to be out ; but, just now, some indescribable impulse urged her on—an impulse prompted by a gnawing dread, whose cause she did not pause to analyse. This fear lent her wings.

She felt that she must see what was happening, were she to die for her temerity ; must see who were the men gathered round the lifeboat, ready to drag it forward at the appointed moment.

When she reached the edge of the cliff, she paused before descending.

In front of her surged a tumult of passionate waves, rearing themselves up towards the storm-driven sky like colossal demons striving to wreak vengeance on the very Heavens, then hurling themselves one against the other with a desperate velocity that shattered the water into columns of hissing spray. The ill-fated fishing vessel quivered among the mad waves, like a live animal brought to bay by a pack of bloodhounds—its sails were torn to shreds, its helm powerless to alter its path, as it drifted closer and closer upon the reefs where so many sister-ships had gone down, winter after winter, at Camper.

But Denise turned her gaze from the sea to the watchers on the shore—the women wringing their hands and calling to the good Virgin, the Guiding Star of the Sea, to save their husbands and sons and brothers ; the men, stern and silent, inwardly cursing their helplessness but ready for action when the time should come. Some eight or ten of them—the strongest and bravest fellows in Camper—were manning the lifeboat, Raoul's gift to the village when he came of age.

They were launching it now, running it down to the beach with a ringing shout of encouragement, their strong, weather-beaten countenances aglow with excitement.

Towering above them all, leading, urging, encouraging, was

Raoul de Kériadec, their beloved *Seigneur*, for whom any one of them would gladly have given his life, and whose very presence diffused fresh hope and confidence in the most despairing.

Just before the launching of the boat, Denise saw several women rush forward to take a wild farewell of the men, husbands and brothers who might be leaving them for ever. One poor young thing—almost a girl—clung piteously to the neck of her young bridegroom, imploring him not to leave her but to yield his place to one who had neither wife nor child to mourn for him.

“Chut, chut! There is no danger,” he said, tenderly unclasping her arms from his neck, and forcing her away from him. “See, my good Jeanne, is there not our master with us? He, too, has a young wife. The good God will spare us. Have courage, *ma fille*; and if I do not come back, say a benediction for my soul.”

With that he was gone; and a cheer rose from those standing near as the boat embarked on its heroic mission.

“They have all got wife or mother or sister to bid them ‘God speed,’ thought Denise; “Raoul, alone, has no one.”

In the breathless excitement that followed she could not analyse her feelings. But certainly for this once, if never before, she knew what it was to be lifted out of herself—above her own petty worries and discontents.

The selfish interests of her fair-weather life dwindled into insignificance before the realization of the dark and tragic existence led by human beings whom, until now, she had regarded with the callous indifference she felt for insensate things that had neither feelings nor affections. She would have given much to be able to join them, and sympathise with them in their present trouble, as Yvonne Hévin was doing. But she was held back by a vague sense of her unpopularity. They looked upon her as an alien: a fine lady who kept herself carefully shielded from all that is ugly and rough and sordid; whose white hands would shrink from contact with theirs, which were hard and soiled with labour. Or so at least Denise expected them to think, as she stood there on the cliff, a dark figure of desolation, watching with dry tearless eyes the terrible scene below her.

But this instinctive desire to give and receive sympathy was not her most strenuous thought just then. Heart and brain were concentrated in an endeavour to follow the course of the lifeboat as it wrestled gallantly with the storm—now rising on the crest of the waves, now hidden from view for an agonising second in the deep black furrows.

Now and again she distinguished Raoul’s voice, ringing in tones of cheering hopefulness above the storm. It was his sanguine energy alone that kept his brave comrades from flinching. Denise knew, as well as any of them, that it was a matter of life or death.

Hers was an impressionable nature; without any pretence of love

she was in an anguish of fear for Raoul, and stung into bitter and overwhelming remorse. She felt that if anything happened to him now she could never forgive herself. It was as though she had driven him to court death by her callousness, her hard-heartedness. It was trouble to think that, in the midst of their anger and upbraidings, Death might come suddenly to separate them before they had made at least a semblance of friendship and forgiveness.

As a matter of fact, had she been the most loving wife in all France, she could not have kept Raoul de Kériadec from his post to-night. It was not from bitterness of spirit or distaste for life that he was thrusting himself into peril; but simply and solely because he considered it a natural duty to assist the people who in a measure depended on him for their material well-being, and who were always encouraged and inspired to fresh efforts by his peculiarly vigorous presence.

But of all painful feelings remorse is perhaps the most poignant. And Denise had cause for it. Now that she stood face to face with the deeper emotions of life, she saw the truth with cruel vividness.

He had had no change. From first to last she had striven to make him a slave instead of a husband, an enemy instead of a friend, a stranger instead of a lover. She had wilfully refused to accommodate herself to her married life. No wonder if at last he turned from her with irrepressible disappointment and growing dislike.

Hark! A ringing shout from the men and women on the shore. The boat had reached the wreck; the exhausted sailors had been rescued without the loss of a single life; and, as the gallant deliverers started on their return, another cheer rang through the air. And then began the supreme struggle.

The desperate efforts of the rowers seemed almost powerless to make way against the raging wind. Their progress was agonizingly slow. To those who watched, it was scarcely apparent; at times even they seemed to be retrograding, driven back towards the reefs, where the sea was boiling and hissing like a fiery cauldron.

Denise, with her hands pressed on her breast, strained forward in an agony of suspense. During those long minutes she lived through years of mental distress. Every muscle of the body, every sense and nerve was stretched to its utmost, as if by *seeing* and *hearing* she could in some way *help*.

Now—for what seemed like many interminable minutes—the gigantic waves entirely hid the boat from view: the wild spray sprang up in jets that licked the Heavens; for all Denise could see, the boat and all on board had been sucked into the depths of that storm-tossed gulf.

A cry broke from the poor women on the beach; the bride, Jeanne, rushed forward as though she would dash into the sea to meet her loved one. Yvonne Hévin caught hold of her in her

lithe, strong arms, reminding her how useless any efforts of hers would be, and she sank down on the wet sands in a wild burst of tears.

Ah! There was the boat. Safe still—tossed high by a cruel wave, but safe. . . . and gradually gaining on the shore.

Denise could no longer endure the suspense alone. She ran down the steep path and presently stood amongst the villagers, her face white and frightened, her eyes large, bright as stars.

Whatever might be their private opinion of Monsieur Raoul's fine wife, no one, at such a time, could bear her malice. To-night, there was the "touch of Nature" that links us all as members of one great family. She was no longer "Madame," exalted above them by birth and education, but a woman sharing their own anxieties. Her very youth and beauty touched them, whilst her evident distress seemed to give her a right to mingle with them. Not that they gave her any welcome or felt any comfort in her presence, as they would have done had Raoul been in her place; but they expressed no surprise, and made no comment when she joined them.

Yvonne alone looked a little startled. But she said nothing, keeping herself aloof and only showing her consciousness of Denise's presence by an occasional glance of disdain in her direction.

But Denise did not care what they thought of her just then.

"Oh, it was madness of them to go," she cried suddenly. "Why did you let them? It was folly to allow it."

There was another shriek from the women.

"Ah, mon Dieu! There is one washed overboard. Holy Virgin have mercy on him. It is my Mathurin!" cried Jeanne. "He is lost. Ah, save him. Mon Dieu, save him!"

"Dame, non! It is Huel." "No, no, it is my poor boy. My Michel." "They will save him!" "See! he has risen on the wave!"

The excitement became intense. Denise could not speak or cry. Who was overboard? Was it perhaps Raoul? No, no, surely that was Raoul himself, dragging the man into the boat at the risk of his own life!

"Ah! God be praised, he is saved," cried Jeanne, falling on her knees; "I could swear that it was my Mathurin."

She was kneeling close to Denise; and a sudden impulse made stately Madame de Kériadec lay a sympathetic touch on her shoulder and say gently:

"Oh, I am so glad for you, poor soul."

"Ah, it is madame! She, too, has a fine young husband, is it not so? Monsieur Raoul, is he not a king among men? But, to me, my Mathurin is above all," said the girl impulsively. "It is not possible for madame to love her garçon as I love mine."

"See! They are quite close now. They are safe, are they not? The danger is over? I cannot bear it much longer."

"Madame is fresh to it," remarked another woman. "Now to us it is nothing new ; we are used to it. That is what wears us away, and makes us seem old when we are yet young in years. It is a sad lot to be a fisherman's wife. For my part, I say that *le bon Dieu* will recompense us for it some day ; who can say ?"

As the boat drew near, men and women flocked to the water's edge, each eager to be the first to welcome back the adventurers.

Yet there was a great dread to be set at rest. What had happened to the figure that had been washed overboard ? Was he hurt ? Unconscious ? Dead ? Was there not one vacant place amongst the rowers ? Whose was it ?

Alas ! for the bride of a week ago.

Thank God ! At last they were out of danger ; a dozen pair of eager arms ready to drag in the boat, a dozen pair of loving arms waiting to be thrown round the necks of the men, drenched as they were from head to foot.

Denise, alone, had not moved. Now that the train of suspense was over, she found that she was trembling so that she could hardly stand. A mist swam before her eyes, a confused din surged in her ears.

Raoul was walking up the beach, carrying something in his arms. Yvonne had sprung to his side, and was speaking to him in a low tone.

An expectant hush had come over the people ; Jeanne was clinging to Raoul's arm, weeping uncontrollably.

"Mathurin—look up—speak to me. Ah ! Do not tell me that he is gone !" she kept repeating wildly. "May the good God bless you, Monsieur Raoul. It was you who saved him. I saw it—and you will be rewarded—God must be good to one who brings back a man to the wife who loves him."

"My poor girl, I did my best," said Raoul, laying down his burden. "No one is to blame. He was stunned at once. There was no chance for him."

She flung herself on the lifeless body in a convulsive burst of grief that unnerved Denise and made her weep like a child. Evidently it was too much for Raoul's feelings also, for he signed to Yvonne to tend to the poor girl, and, elbowing his way through the group, stood a little apart from the rest. He was close to Denise, but did not see or notice her.

An accident like this cut him to the quick. He felt responsible as it were, to the women, for the lives of those whom he had taken out on so perilous a quest ; and Jeanne's pathetic distress almost unmanned him.

"Heaven knows," he exclaimed aloud, "I would have given my life for any one of theirs."

Like most men he hated exhibiting his softer feelings ; and when

Denise moved shyly towards him, he hardened his face, and stamped his foot, as though annoyed at his own weakness.

Then, recognising his wife, he exclaimed, in most unfeigned astonishment :

"Denise? Can it be you?"

"Yes. I could not stay at home. It was too horrible. And that poor girl! I cannot get over it at all."

She broke off, too agitated to speak.

"You ought not to have come. It was no scene for you. Tiens! You are trembling all over, and white as a ghost. Come! You need not be so upset. This is common enough on this coast."

"But Jeanne! O, do let me go to her. Perhaps I may be of use. I entreat you, Raoul, let me go to her."

"No. It is not for us to comfort her just now. Least of all for you," answered Raoul firmly, but not unkindly. "She has her mother with her. And Yvonne understands this sort of thing. Besides, you are a stranger to her. I assure you that there is no work for you here. Will you not go home? Eh bien . . . I must insist. You will not be fit for your journey to-morrow. If you desire it, I will see you safely home."

"O no. They will miss *you*, though I, as you say, am useless. Already they are calling to you. I will not take you away. I can easily walk home alone."

"I will help you up the cliff. Mais! . . . What is the matter? Are you ill?" he exclaimed, as she staggered feebly up the steep pathway.

"No. Only a little faint. It is the excitement. And the path is so steep, against the wind. I shall recover directly."

Without answering, he quietly lifted her in his arms, with as much ease as if she were a baby, and carried her quickly up the cliff.

She was too tired to offer any resistance. His arms held her tightly and securely; her head dropped wearily on his shoulder.

How strong, and yet how gentle he was. How small and weak and insignificant she felt in comparison! Something in his strength and tenderness (for it was the union of two such *opposites* that touched her, perhaps because neither of them formed part of her own nature), something in the clasp of his arms, made her thrill all over and yield herself to him like a tired child.

The path was nothing to him; he almost ran up it. When he reached the top of the cliff he still held her for a moment, though he kept his eyes away from her face.

"Shall I take you home? Or are you fit to walk?" he asked.

"Oh, I will walk. Thank you. Thank you. Was I not very heavy? How strong you are, Raoul."

"You are a mere feather-weight. Any boy could carry you."

"And how brave you are, too," she added hurriedly, half in a

whisper ; " I must say that to you, Raoul. It makes me ashamed of myself. I should like to tell you how much I regret all my unkindness to you."

" O, for that, there are faults on both sides," he said, awkwardly. " I suppose we could not help being unsuited. But you will be happy now, I hope, Denise."

" And you, Raoul ? "

" I ? O, yes happy enough," he said, with a laugh. " Life is full of interests, first in one thing, then in another. If one plan does not succeed, one has only to try a new one."

" I detest myself ! " cried Denise, bursting into tears. " I do not—want—to go—to Paris, mon mari."

" Nonsense : nonsense," he said, with an amused smile. " You are so tired that you do not know what you are saying. You must go home and rest. I really must either take you, or insist on your going at once."

" You will not run into any more detestable dangers to-night ? "

" I hope not. But I like to be on the spot, in case of an emergency. Besides there are one or two fishing smacks knocking about just outside. . . . Are you sure you feel well enough to go home alone ? "

" Perfectly."

She was on her feet, standing before him, looking so pretty and loveable in her dark hood, that, for a second, Raoul could not help letting his eyes rest on her face. Then he stooped and kissed her, lightly and coldly, on the forehead.

" Good-bye, Denise."

" Good-bye, Raoul."

That was their parting. There was not much in it. But there was enough to show that the tables were turned, and that, of the two, Raoul de Kériadec was now the master—the least troubled—and, if possible, the least loving.

(To be continued.)



GIP; OR, THE POWER OF FIDELITY.

BY ANNE BEALE.

SOME time ago we had some amazing revelations of the power of attraction in that unjustly-maligned animal, a donkey. It must be confessed they were unexpected ; for no one looks for asinine perfection, albeit traits of fascination do sometimes appear in very unlikely individuals.

But no one is surprised at the superhuman qualities of the dog. We use the word superhuman advisedly ; for canine faithfulness surpasses, alas ! that of the so-called superior animal, man. Everyone knows this, so it is needless to insist upon it. At least, civilisation cannot be charged with an over-amount of self-immolation, such as the dog shows when he dies on his master's grave. This sort of fidelity is probably a relic of heathendom ; for, we are told, the Hindoo widow was a voluntary victim on her husband's tomb, though we are inclined to suspect she is nowadays better pleased to be an involuntary survivor. Self-sacrifice, like enthusiasm, dies a natural death if let alone, in the human if not in the canine race. Happily, in the change and rush of this age there is no time even for lovers to die of grief or go out of their minds ; and common sense is gradually replacing sensibility.

Still, fidelity is a noble virtue, and when joined to sagacity, as in the case of our dog, Gip, passes human understanding.

Gip was a Welsh terrier, of medium size. He was not stout and wheezy, like some of the unfortunate animals that waddle along painfully after their mistresses ; nor was he of that toy species that one sees occasionally led by a string by tall and exquisite masters. Can there be a more pitiful sight than the one, or a more ludicrous exhibition than the other ?

No : Gip was active, strong-limbed, intelligent and full of life. He knew not the meaning of the verb "to waddle," and had never been enslaved by collar or cord. His black-and-white coat was never shaggy, though its hairs were long, and he kept himself clean in a wonderful fashion. His body was slim, his head erect, and his spirits as buoyant as the air of his native mountains.

Then his eyes ! Why are the eyes of most animals so pleading and expressive ? Why are there floods of feeling in their depths ? Doubtless because they do not speak our tongue, and, like foreigners, appeal to us for love or compassion through the eyes. Gip's were of the softest, goldenest brown. Everybody that looked into them loved the dog. Even his conceited little black nose did not, as is sometimes the case with the *petit nez retroussé*, cool the tender passion.

Gip had only to toss his head and throw back his shaggy eyebrows, to look you in the face and to perform his various antics, to conquer the most obdurate heart. Even those abnormally selfish people who declared they "couldn't bear dogs, and that they ought to be kept in their places," relaxed their dislike, or made-believe to do so, in Gip's favour.

His amiability was equal to his personal attractions.

He came to us as a puppy, and passed through his juvenile days and submitted to his education without a snarl. If he ever experienced ill-temper, he displayed it only by a strange twist of that expressive little nose. We are thus minute in describing his characteristics in the hope that the superior animals may be so impressed by his virtues as to emulate them. Comparisons are, we know, invidious ; but we venture to affirm, below our breath, that the lords of the creation might learn many a lesson, not only of faith, but of love and gratitude, and before all, good humour, from the brute. What a boon is a good temper !

And Gip had it to perfection. We tried it, too ; for we instructed him in the difficult art of sitting up, smoking a pipe, and keeping food on his nose until duly permitted to swallow it. The number of spills transferred from the mantel-shelf to Gip's mouth was beyond computation ; for all in-comers, rich and poor, were curious to see him "smoke a pipe." We fervently hope that in this particular accomplishment he was not imitated by the inveterate smokers of to-day. We here affirm that he was not addicted to smoking ; on the contrary, he disliked it. Still, it was pretty to see him sitting up, spill in mouth and biscuit on nose, till with a leap he threw the one away and ate the other. We wish all smokers would do the same.

Gip's devotion to his mistress was another of his virtues. No temptation ever withdrew him from her side, not even that of the rival females that did their utmost to attract him. He was not a flirt, and literally turned up his nose when four-footed dames ran after him ; an example not to be despised in this fast age. A little more fidelity might not be amiss among the bipeds ; and if the male displayed it, the female would follow suit.

It would be impossible to describe the walks and runs that Gip and his friend enjoyed together, through the woods, by the river, up the hill-side, beside the brooks ; now pausing for breath or admiration, anon rushing on lest the allotted time should be exceeded. It may be truthfully affirmed that Gip was a lover of Nature, and when seated on some felled tree-trunk or moss-clad stone, would survey the scene around him with ineffable pleasure, just as if he were monarch of the world, which, in truth, he was : for the air he snuffed in, the sun that enlivened him, the flies he industriously snapped at, were all his own.

Happy Gip ! and it may be added, happy friend for no stray

calf, or even herd of cattle could approach her but her devoted cavalier showed fight. Gip never turned tail, but with indomitable courage faced the enemy. It was curious to watch him keep half a dozen cows at bay, who after advancing with heavy tread and inquisitive eyes, would retreat as if terrified by his shrill bark and impudent little face.

He was a well-trained and obedient dog, and although free of the house, was, with some difficulty, it must be confessed, induced to pass his nights by the kitchen fire. This was no hardship, for the anthracite coal and well-kneaded "balls" keep well alight, and, like Gip himself, were as lively at morn as at eve. As there is no better safeguard to a house than a terrier with a sharp bark, we felt safe when he was below stairs.

And safe, indeed, we were, as the following incident will prove. It happened many years ago, in a country town where gas was not, and inflammable oils not general; where various kinds of candles were used in the parlour and "farthing dips," as they were called, in the kitchen. It was past eleven o'clock, and we were just about to step into bed. We were arrested in the act by a sudden bark. "What is the matter with Gip?" we asked one of the other—for we were really *two*—and not plural by virtue of the royal pronoun. A curious crackling sound ensued, and as our Matty was somewhat eccentric in her movements, we concluded that she was performing some out-of-the-way feat, objectionable to Gip.

"I verily believe she is chopping up wood," we exclaimed, as the unusual sound increased, and therewith the barking. "Or she is putting chips on the fire, or doing something she ought not."

This latter sentence severely, for Matty did not always see things with our eyes. What domestic does, however well-conducted she may be? This obliquity of vision causes much domestic disagreement even amongst the most perfectly-modelled households. But Matty was a good girl in the main, albeit her eyes were less straight than ours, and her heedlessness —

But the barking became furious, and culminated at our bedroom door.

"Go down, Gip! Go downstairs," we cried from within.

Gip did not obey, and barked on so outrageously that we were compelled to open the door, with a "down Gip" on our lips.

In a moment he seized the skirt of our night-gear, and began to tug at it as if he were mad. We were conscious that the crackling increased, and thought he was anxious to lead us downstairs to its source. On the contrary, he pulled the other way, towards a portion of the house to which he was unaccustomed, and which was actually unfurnished. We followed, for he tugged so resolutely that we could not help it. A swing-door leading into a side passage was the first obstruction. We opened it, and no sooner were we inside than we were tugged towards another door. We opened this also, and were greeted by

a volume of flames. Providentially we had our wits about us, and guessed whence they arose. The room was a lumber room, in the centre of which was a deal box full of candles, and round which were other boxes and much inflammable matter. It seemed all ablaze.

Gip let go our skirt and barked again as we shouted for Matty. We were three women in the house, one an invalid. We rushed through the swing-door, followed, or rather preceded by, Gip, to a dressing-room. There was a hip-bath half full of water. We do not realise, until sudden emergency, the meaning of the words, "strength according to our day." We fail to realise, even now, how we were able to uplift bath and its contents, carry it across the landing, through the passage and the flames, and finally to pour the water over the débris in the centre of the room.

We then rushed back for the water-jugs and emptied them over the burning boxes, Gip accompanying, and we shouting "Matty." But no Matty came. The contents of the bath had arrested the fire, and it had not proceeded beyond the deal boxes and their contents in the middle of the room. But it had nearly consumed them, lapped up the grease, and burnt into the floor. But for Gip the whole house must soon have been in a blaze.

We, Gip and his mistress, finally extinguished the flames, though the fire still smouldered in the floor. There was no more water, so we rushed downstairs, and there on the kitchen-floor lay the delinquent Matty in a dead faint. She had been in search of candles, and, instead of cutting, had burnt the string that tied the pounds together, and had left an end of twine alight. In these days people leave ends of lucifer matches alight, with worse consequences still—but it is useless to preach care to careless people.

Matty had gone to bed, little knowing the harm she had done, had been aroused by Gip's bark, had become aware of her act and its consequences, hurried downstairs, and by way of atoning for her misdemeanour, had fallen into a swoon. This is often the way of the world. People sin and expect their friends to pay the penalty.

But neither Gip nor ourselves had time for this. He barked a contemptuous little bark over Matty's prostrate form; we cast some water upon her face, and then we proceeded to fill water-cans and to lug them upstairs. Gip would have carried them if he could, but that was not in his line. However, we finally extinguished the fire, and thanked God for His great mercy; while Gip, His instrument, capered about enthusiastically, understanding everything.

Meanwhile, our invalid was in much alarm, but we soon re-assured her. Having done so, we returned to Matty, and found her still on the kitchen-floor. Although she was apparently conscious, she considered this the best way of testifying her penitence. It was hard lines after our fright to be obliged to uplift its author; but she was too much abashed to rise of her own accord. Gip began to tug at her hastily thrown-on clothing, and between us we succeeded in

getting her on her feet. "What will I do? what will I do?" she ejaculated; and found what sentimentalists call "relief in tears." We scolded and barked, and barked and scolded, until the hysteria ceased, waiting till the following day to "point the moral;" when we made it very pointed indeed.

Henceforth Gip became the Hero he deserved to be, for had he not saved a house, and perhaps a terrace, or maybe a whole town from the flames? People asked what could have put it into his head; and made invidious remarks upon the superiority of instinct over sense, as illustrated by him and Matty. Vivisection was not then the open question it is now, or the town would have joined the ranks of the Anti-Vivisectionists, for "Breathed there the man with soul so dead" who could be base enough to operate on Gip, whether anisthetically or diabolically?

Still he fell a victim to anisthetics, though, happily, not in the laboratory.

It breaks one's heart to tell the tale, but heroes do not always die as one could wish, either on the battle-field or at home. Gordon did not; and how many hearts were harrowed by his end! But Gip had a free and joyous life for many a long day after the episode of the fire. He gambolled at our side wherever we went, slumbered on our skirts by day and near the fire by night, was well fed and universally admired.

Never was there a happier dog, till on a melancholy and never-to-be-forgotten afternoon we were going through the town, blythe as ever, when we were approached by a strange big dog. For the first time in his life pugnacious Gip turned tail. He actually shivered with fear, and was about to run away, when the big dog laid hold of his shaggy coat. We in turn laid hold of Gip, and beat the big dog with our umbrella. A struggle ensued between us, which ended in the release of Gip. In the providence of the Almighty, the big dog went off without attacking us, and we carried trembling Gip home. No wound could be found beneath the long hair, and we were detailing the passage-at-arms to our beloved invalid, when down came a message from a friend who had seen the affray from his window: "Chain up Gip at once. The dog that attacked him is mad."

Chain up Gip who had never been chained in his life! What were we to do?

Friends flocked in council, and we heard that the big dog had already bitten many other dogs, that consternation reigned, and that we had no alternative. A barrel was rolled into our little garden, carpeted, be-strawed, and made as much like a drawing-room as possible. We fastened Gip up, and placed him inside. His reproachful glances were unutterably painful. So long as we were near him he was tolerably quiet, but alone, he pulled at his cord and barked incessantly. Neither of us had much sleep that night, and the neighbours must have been equally wakeful.

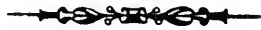
The next morning news came that it was uncertain whether the big dog was mad. He belonged to one of the keepers at the Park, and was shut up. Still, several dogs had been sacrificed that he had bitten, and Gip was not released. In the afternoon it was announced that the delinquent was not mad, and Gip was set free. He did not seem quite as happy and bright as usual, and refused the milk we offered him ; but he stuck to us more closely than ever.

For a day or two reports of the keeper's dog varied. Now he was mad, anon he was not mad, but Gip was never again imprisoned ; though there was an outcry concerning his freedom when so much doubt was astir.

Finally, the keeper's dog was declared to be mad, and shot. Nobody pitied him, poor fellow, but everybody pitied his victims. What a holocaust it was. Lion, the doctor's dog, the pride and giant of the town, was sacrificed amongst them, but Gip was let to go free.

Only one more day, however. A medical friend took the matter into his own hands. Unknown to us, he lured Gip downstairs, and put an end to all doubt concerning hydrophobia, so far as we were concerned, by gently administering a dose of prussic acid. Painlessly and unconsciously, we were assured, our treasured and faithful friend literally "fell asleep."

Let the curtain fall over the grief and the tears.



CRITICISM APPRAISED ; OR, THE CHAFFINCH AND THE WARBLER.

(From the French of La Chambeaudie).

FROM noon to night the Warbler sang,
 'Twas all the happiness he knew ;
 At last the chaffinch came one day,
 To prattle of an envious crew :
 "The thrush, the jay, the crow," said he,
 "Both great and small, both old and young,
 Even the stupid gosling dares
 To say 'tis time you held your tongue.
 Yet you sing on and pay no heed
 Throughout the livelong summer day,
 I fain such patience would learn too—
 The secret of it, tell me pray."

"Brother," the Warbler said, and smiled,
 "The nightingale once praised my song ;
 When mighty masters thus applaud,
 Why should we heed the vulgar throng ?"

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS.

FOR LOVE AND CONSCIENCE.

IN an old manor-house, within a long day's ride from Naseby, there is a certain stately apartment known as the Great Hall, which is lighted by large windows to the south, and around three sides of which runs a gallery, reached from the south-east corner by a flight of a dozen steps. In this gallery hangs the picture of a young and beautiful woman, attired in the costume of the Stuart period. A gigantic clock, whose pendulum is enclosed in a huge wooden case, still stands below the west gallery; and, in front of this clock, if the inquisitive visitor should chance to raise the carpet, he would see a dark stain upon the boards beneath, and he would be told that this stain is a stain of blood, and his informant, pointing to the picture which hangs exactly opposite, would say that this picture is the portrait of Mistress Anne Fane, and would add, with lowered voice, that the blood-stain and Mistress Anne were not remotely connected. How it came to pass that so lovely and gentle a lady became associated with a bloody deed it is now my purpose to relate.

On a June afternoon, in the year 1645, the Great Hall of Fane Place was occupied by two persons. The windows were carefully shuttered, and only a small crack was left open to admit light. The door was closed. On the table were spread viands, and a gentleman, in the dress of a cavalier, was hastily partaking of refreshment. His companion—a young woman of singularly prepossessing appearance—ministered deftly to his wants, laying her finger on her lips when he attempted to speak.

“Hush!” she said softly. “Eat, Master Quivil, while thou canst. Who knows what may happen next? My brother Toby watches, and he may bring us news of pursuit at any moment. Eat!”

He ate and drank, therefore, at her command. But when he had satisfied his hunger, Master Quivil rose and stood before her, with longing words trembling upon his lips. He was young—not more, certainly, than five-and-twenty—and handsome, with a winning smile and bright eyes. She was, perhaps, three years his junior, and as beautiful as a morn in May. There were, indeed, some who sighed that there was no Court where Mistress Anne Fane might have displayed her charms and won the heart of some great noble by her beauty and her grace. But there was no Court now, and the king was in sorrow, and Mistress Anne's Mechlin lace was sold, and her mother's jewels pawned, and she herself had donned a sad-coloured robe and her countenance was careworn. Nevertheless, the fugitive from Naseby thought that she was the most exquisite sight that he had ever seen, and his eyes dwelt tenderly upon her face.

"How can I thank thee enough?" he began. "I came here friendless and thou hast succoured me. I found thee alone—thy father dead—thy elder brother far away—nobody to defend thee but a lad of fifteen and a dotard servant. And yet thou hast received me—fed me—entertained me——"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "Thou fightest in the good cause, and I would die for such. I did it for the king."

"For the king *only*?" he said.

"I did it for the king," she repeated, blushing. "But do not tarry, Master Quivil. I pray thee go, for I cannot conceal thee here. Even our lumber rooms are bare, and not the veriest mouse could shelter here in safety."

The Great Hall was, in truth, almost denuded of furniture. The pictures in the gallery had gone. The books had been taken from the shelves. Scarce aught remained but a table and some chairs, a settle by the hearth, and the clock, whose enormous white face seemed to stare menacingly at the two young people, and whose sonorous ticking seemed to warn them that time sped away, and that even now the feet of the pursuer might be upon the threshold. Mistress Anne heard it and made a fresh effort to despatch her guest.

"Master Quivil, I pray thee to go," she said again. "'Tis beyond my power to conceal thee here."

"I will, I will!" he cried. "But first, oh, Mistress Anne, should I not wait till sundown? I cannot fly in open day. 'Tis little more than four by the clock."

She followed his gaze to the clock's face and hesitated.

"Mistress, I will depart at sundown. Until then, my flight would command an easy capture. Harbour me for these few hours, sweet mistress, and I will be gone. Thou knowest not what these few hours are to me. But hast thou forgotten our childish days? Hast thou forgotten when we played together? That was a dear and precious time, when the summers seemed eternal, and peace seemed to be everywhere, and we little dreamed of coming care and future separation. I was but a lad, and thou a little maid, and yet, mistress, I called thee sweetheart. Dost thou recall?"

She did recall and her pale cheek was flushed with a bright pink as he spoke. But she did not reply. Instead, she averted her eyes, and after a moment, he continued speaking.

"I gave thee once a rose," he said. "Dost remember? 'Twas June, a June so long ago that it seems like a dream. We walked together in the rose-garden. I mind me we had escaped from Henry Dowdeswell and left him sulking. And I plucked a rose and said, 'Take it, Nan; take it as a pledge from the unformed boy, that the gallant man shall return to woo thee.' And thou took'st it, sweetheart, with a tear glistening in thy pretty eyes, and thou didst promise to dry its petals and fold them among thy raiment, and keep them till I came back to prove my gallantry and to win thee. Alas,

Nan, I have come back. But my gallantry is unproved, for the day is lost, and I have fled, and how can I hope that thou wilt smile upon me now ? ”

He caught her hand and kissed it.

“ Ah, Master Quivil —— ”

“ Wilt not call me Jack, sweet love ? Dear heart, I come to thee scarred and luckless. I dare not offer thee my empty hand. But send me not away comfortless. ”

“ Dear Jack, ” she murmured, blushing, “ thou hast ever been in my heart. ”

He caught her to him.

“ And if happier days should come, Nan, sweet Nan, when my hand holds a triumphant sword, and when the king marches proudly to London, and when the gay court gathers again, gayer and statelier than before, say, Nan, wilt thou take my happy hand and suffer me to lead thee to that bright court, which thou wilt brighten and adorn as a diamond brightens and adorns the crown. ”

“ Oh, Jack, thou speakest too kindly. ”

“ Nay, mistress, I am thy humble servant. But wouldest thou thus glorify my poor life ? ”

“ Oh, Jack ; dear Jack. ”

But even as he pressed her to his breast, something passing the window outside for a moment obscured the one ray of light which streamed through the shutter that had been left a-jar. The girl started violently and withdrew from her lover's embrace.

“ What was that ? ” she whispered, fearfully.

“ Nothing, my queen, ” he said, reassuringly.

“ Nay, nay, Jack ; someone passed. Didst not see the shadow ? ”

“ 'Twas old Diggon, mayhap, or thy brother Toby. ”

“ No, no, ” she said in terror. “ Diggon is in the field, and Toby watches from the road. This is someone who has alighted at the postern gate and who comes through the garden. ”

“ Then it is someone who knows the house well, dear love. A friend, belike ! ”

“ Nay. There is no one. Young Master Dowdeswell alone hath come hither, over and again. But he is a traitor and hath come here spying the land. And oh, Jack, if he should come again, he comes as thy enemy. Was he at Naseby ? ”

“ He was, Nan. I saw the prickeared rogue. ”

“ It may be he. Oh, Jack, Jack ! ”

Whether it was Master Dowdeswell or not, it was clear that it was someone who was acquainted with the ways of Fane Place. For in another moment the sound was heard as of a handle being turned, and then the heavy tread of one who crossed the outer vestibule and drew near to the door of the great hall. Anne clasped her lover's arm convulsively.

“ My own love, thou must escape, ” she sobbed. “ Through the

window? No, no! He will have placed a watch. In the gallery? Alas, not a mouse could shelter there!"

She looked around wildly. The footsteps drew yet nearer. Suddenly her eyes lighted on the clock's face.

"The clock, the clock!" she cried in a stifled voice.

Throwing open the case and holding aside the pendulum, she motioned to Quivil to get within. He obeyed her instantly and without a word. She closed the case upon him, and, as she turned away, the door of the apartment opened and a loud and stern voice demanded admittance.

Before she had time either for welcome or denial, the speaker entered. He was a tall and soldierly man, wanting yet several years of thirty—a man whose countenance had acquired the sour expression cultivated by the Roundheads, but who was not naturally ill-favoured. He looked suspiciously round the room as he came in and finally doffed his beaver to the lady.

"Good-day, Mistress Anne," he said.

"Good-day, Master Dowdeswell," she returned.

"I come upon business," he announced. "I have a search-warrant to ransack thy house. I seek the body of Master John Quivil. He is supposed to be in hiding here or hereabouts, and I——"

He paused, but she did not speak.

"I came this way," he went on, after a moment. "I thought, madam, it might be more agreeable that a friend should search thy house than a stranger."

"'Twas kindly done, Master Dowdeswell."

"Nay, madam. Duty is rarely kind, and I have strictly fulfilled my duty, and have cut off every avenue of escape from this house by entering myself through the postern-gate while directing my men to follow the public path. I am not kind. But I have been minded to make the search as little painful to thee as possible. Is the traitor John Quivil hidden here?" he demanded.

"There is no traitor here," returned Anne quickly.

Dowdeswell smiled grimly.

"Mistress Anne, thou know'st what I mean," he said. "Thine is a wilful misapprehension. I ask again: Doth the body of the traitor John Quivil lie here concealed?"

"I conceal no traitors, Master Dowdeswell."

"But dost thou conceal the body of John Quivil, madam?"

For a moment she could not answer, and Dowdeswell smiled again.

"I perceive that thou hast lately eaten," he said. Then, glancing at the clock:

"Half-past four! 'Tis marvellous strange that thou should'st dine or sup at such an hour."

"The times are strange, Master Dowdeswell, and we do strange things in strange times."

"Aye, mistress. Even to the harbouring of traitors. Who, I

desire thee tell me, who hath broken bread in this place? But nay. Answer me not. Cover not thy malignancy with falsehood. Thou hast a traitor here and I will drag him forth."

Then, striding to the door, he shouted to his underlings, who had just reached the front entrance of the house. Bidding them search the mansion and the out-houses, he seated himself at the table, laying a pair of pistols upon it. Anne still stood, with her hands clasped, in front of the great clock, whose hands pointed to half-past four. It seemed to her that she dared not move from this position. She fancied that Quivil's breathing was audible, and she feared lest Dowdeswell should approach his hiding-place too near.

"Wilt thou not be seated, mistress?" asked Dowdeswell presently, in a gentler tone.

"I do not sit with the king's enemies," she replied haughtily.

"Ah, mistress, reproach me not," he protested. "Time was when Henry Dowdeswell could win a smile from fair Mistress Anne Fane."

"That, sir, was when Master Henry Dowdeswell's heart beat true."

"It hath beat ever true, Mistress Anne, and never truer than now. Didst suppose that Henry Dowdeswell's heart could beat for any maid but Mistress Anne Fane?"

"Master Dowdeswell!"

"Listen, Mistress Anne. Dost forget all the days of youth—all the games that we twain played together—all our intercourse, sweet and bitter by turns—all the jealousies and rivalries between thy humble servant and Jack Quivil? I never liked the lad. But I forbore to cuff one upon whom my mistress smiled. Thou did'st not often smile upon me, Mistress Anne. Yet there were times when thou call'dst me Henry, and when thy hand would clasp mine as we crossed the rotten bridge returning from church, and when thy thanks came prettily, if I brought thee a honeycomb or a dish of yellow plums."

"Aye. I bear in mind thy goodness of yore. But Master Henry Dowdeswell was then a loyal subject of the king."

"Charles Stuart, lady, was then a loyal king unto his subjects."

"Tut, tut, sir! His most sacred majesty can do no wrong."

"Mistress, we will not argue that. Speak not we of the king. Speak we only of ourselves. Mistress Anne, once thou wert little Nan to me."

"Truly, Master Dowdeswell, thou hast a fine memory!"

"Aye. I have never forgotten one moment of time passed in thy fair presence."

"Hush, Master Dowdeswell! I cannot hear thee."

"Because I serve not the king, madam?"

"Aye. And because ——"

"Not because thou lov'st another? Say not *that*!"

"I must say it, Master Dowdeswell."

He looked at her gravely.

"Mistress, is it all forgot?" he said, chidingly. "I twined many a rosy garland for thee in the days of my carelessness and my profligacy, and thou frown'dst not always then. Wilt not smile now, when—in my new habit of grace—I, an elect soul, ask for thy favour and offer thee peace?"

"Thou wert ever kind," she said, trembling. "But I cannot love twain."

"And thou lovest—whom?"

"Pardon me, Master Dowdeswell. But what is that to thee?"

Then there was silence for a space, and presently the trampling of men's feet sounded in the vestibule. Dowdeswell rose and went to the door.

"We have searched, Captain, but we have discovered none," said a harsh voice. "Only in the stable a worn-out nag reposeth, and there be blood upon his flanks and a slight wound, and methinks he hath been in the battle, and in the holster was this kerchief, embroidered with the letters J. Q."

"Good," returned Dowdeswell. "Await me without."

Then he shut the door and came back to his former position, fronting Anne, and with the clock that still pointed to half-past four behind her.

"Mistress Anne Fane," he began sententiously, "I like thee well, and I would fain make thee my wife and gradually draw thee to higher delights and school thy mind to right thinking. To my sorrow, thou mislikest me, and I withdraw. But ere I quit thee, I conjure thee tell me—as thou fearest God and as thou lovest virtue and desirest the rewards of Heaven—dost thou conceal here in some secret chamber or in some hidden vault the person of the rebel whom I seek?"

"No," said Anne.

"As thou darest the fires of hell, mistress, I conjure thee to speak the truth."

"I do speak the truth, sir."

"Without quibbling, mistress, I bid thee inform me if one lie hid here in some secret chamber whom I account a rebel."

"There is no secret chamber here, Master Dowdeswell."

"Mistress Anne, *is* John Quivil here?"

"Master Dowdeswell, thou hast sought throughout the house and thou hast not found him, and I tell thee there is no secret chamber here."

"Then to whom appertaineth the wearied nag in the stable?"

"How can I say? Our stable-door hath no key, and he who will may place his beast there."

"Mistress, fear the Lord and speak the truth! To whom appertaineth the kerchief embroidered with the letters J. Q.?"

"Master Dowdeswell, thou hurriest to conclusions. May no man own the initials J. Q. save one?"

"Parley not with me, madam. I love thee, Mistress Anne. But my conscience condemns me even while I bandy words with thee. Tell me—lest I drag thee to the seat of justice—where hidest thou the person of John Quivil?"

She was almost at her wit's end. But she held firm.

"How knowest thou that Master Quivil was at the ill-fated field of Naseby?" she asked.

"How know I? Because I saw him, madam—saw him in the rear company of the man Charles Stuart, whom thou callest king. I saw him, and I know that he fled in this direction. Madam, the evidence of his presence here is circumstantial. Here is his wearied steed and his kerchief. Yield him up."

"Were it in my power, Master Dowdeswell, never would I yield him up! The king's leal servants are my true friends, and I deliver no faithful friend to a cruel foe."

"Because thou lovest him, mistress?"

"Not so. Because I love the king."

Dowdeswell gave a short laugh.

"'Tis a woman's wile," he said. "The traitor is here, madam; thou hast as good as admitted his presence. I must away with thee to the seat of judgment. We will see if a more powerful hand than mine can force confession from thee."

But he did not order her to prepare herself to depart. He stood looking at her with blazing eyes.

"Vain and trifling woman!" he burst forth at length. "Thinkest thou to dissemble with me? Thinkest thou to deceive the Lord's elect? Know that I see thy wicked endeavour—that I perceive thy bold purpose—and that I despise thy shallow deceit. The man John Quivil is here. Madam, he is here, and I forbid thee to conceal him longer. Acquaint me, I command thee, where he is!"

He paused for a moment. Then he proceeded more gently.

"Woman, if thou hast a conscience, confess thy sin," he said. "Thou lovest: 'tis pity, for thou lovest an ill man. But let not thy love destroy thy conscience. 'Tis truth that I bid thee speak. Do thou thy duty and tell me this thing."

"Master Dowdeswell, thou said'st but now that thou lovedst me," said Anne. "If thou hast ever loved me, ask no more, but depart in peace."

"I said I loved thee!" he cried impetuously. "Yea, and I *do* love thee! Even as Jacob loved Rachel love I thee! Even as the hart desireth the water-brooks—even so do I desire thee! My sole desire in life is to content thee, and if needful I would shed my blood for thee. Dear Nan, wilt not return my love, and come into my arms, confessing thy great fault of to-day and telling me where John Quivil lies hid?"

"No, Master Dowdeswell," said Anne, with dignity. "Take me

away and immure me in the vilest of dungeons. But for my love's sake and for my conscience' sake, I will reveal naught."

"But wilt not love me, Nan?"

"No."

He was deeply mortified. The perspiration stood upon his brow and his heart was hot within him. He looked at her again. Then, with an unpremeditated gesture, he raised his eyes to the clock-face above her head. Something in its aspect struck him strangely.

"Half-past four!" he exclaimed. "Half-past four! Is it always half-past four here, mistress?"

"The clock hath stopped," faltered she.

"Strange that it should stop even as I entered the chamber," said he. "Let me set it going for thee, madam."

"Nay," she said quickly. "Why set it going for naught, since thou art going to take me to jail? Let the clock be."

"That would be indeed an unkind measure," said he. "Even if thou be taken hence, should not the members of thy household know the time?"

"I have no servants," said she.

"None, madam? Beware. Dost dwell alone — absolutely solitary?"

"My brother Toby is here," she admitted. "But he never looks at the clock. And our old servant is half-blind and cannot read the time."

"Nevertheless, I will see the clock," said Dowdeswell.

And putting her aside, he flung the clock-case wide.

"By St. George!" he exclaimed, "'tis even as I suspected."

"Quivil stepped forth, his plumed hat in one hand and a pistol in the other. He bowed low and courteously.

"Good-day, Master Dowdeswell," he said. "We are ill-met."

"I arrest thee," said Dowdeswell. "Sergeant Fairchild——"

He was about to raise his voice to call upon his subordinates to enter and to seize Quivil. But, quick as thought, Anne circumvented him. Snatching one of his pistols from the table, she darted up the flight of steps into the gallery; and leaning over the railing, she cried to Dowdeswell to stay his movements.

"Hold!" she cried imperatively. "See here, Master Dowdeswell! I have thy pistol. It is loaded. I hold it to my heart. Raise thy voice but by a syllable—touch Master Quivil by but one finger—and I fire!—I fire, hark ye, and I am dead! And thou lovest me, Master Dowdeswell, thou lovest me! Nay—stand where thou art. Stir but an inch, and I die. See—the pistol is at my bosom! Listen! Make up thy mind to depart in peace and leave Jack Quivil unharmed, while I count ten. For if, when I come to ten, thou be still here, I fire—and I die—thy little Nan, whom thou lovest, dies!"

She began to count, leaning over the balustrade, with the pistol pressed against her breast and her finger on the trigger, and with her

eyes fixed upon the two men. They dared not stir. The determination in her eyes held them spellbound.

"*One*," she began.

"Stop, Nan, stop!" entreated Quivil. "Let me go with him! I care naught. Stop, dear love, stop counting, and take that pistol from thy breast! Come down, I adjure thee!"

"*Two*," she proceeded, slowly. *Three*——"

"Mistress Anne, I cannot do the thing I would. But O, for the love of God, take that deadly instrument from thy breast!" implored Dowdeswell.

"*Four*," she went on. "*Five—six* ——"

"Nan, thou art killing me! I care not a jot for imprisonment or death."

"*Seven* ——"

"Nan, my little Nan, think that man who loves owes duty too. Have mercy on me, and come down!"

"*Eight* ——"

"Nan, sweet soul, forbear!"

"Nan, in God's name, cease!"

"*Nine* ——"

"For love's sake!" cried Quivil, pointing his pistol at his own breast.

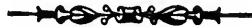
"For conscience!" exclaimed Dowdeswell, seizing the pistol which still lay upon the table and thrusting it against his head.

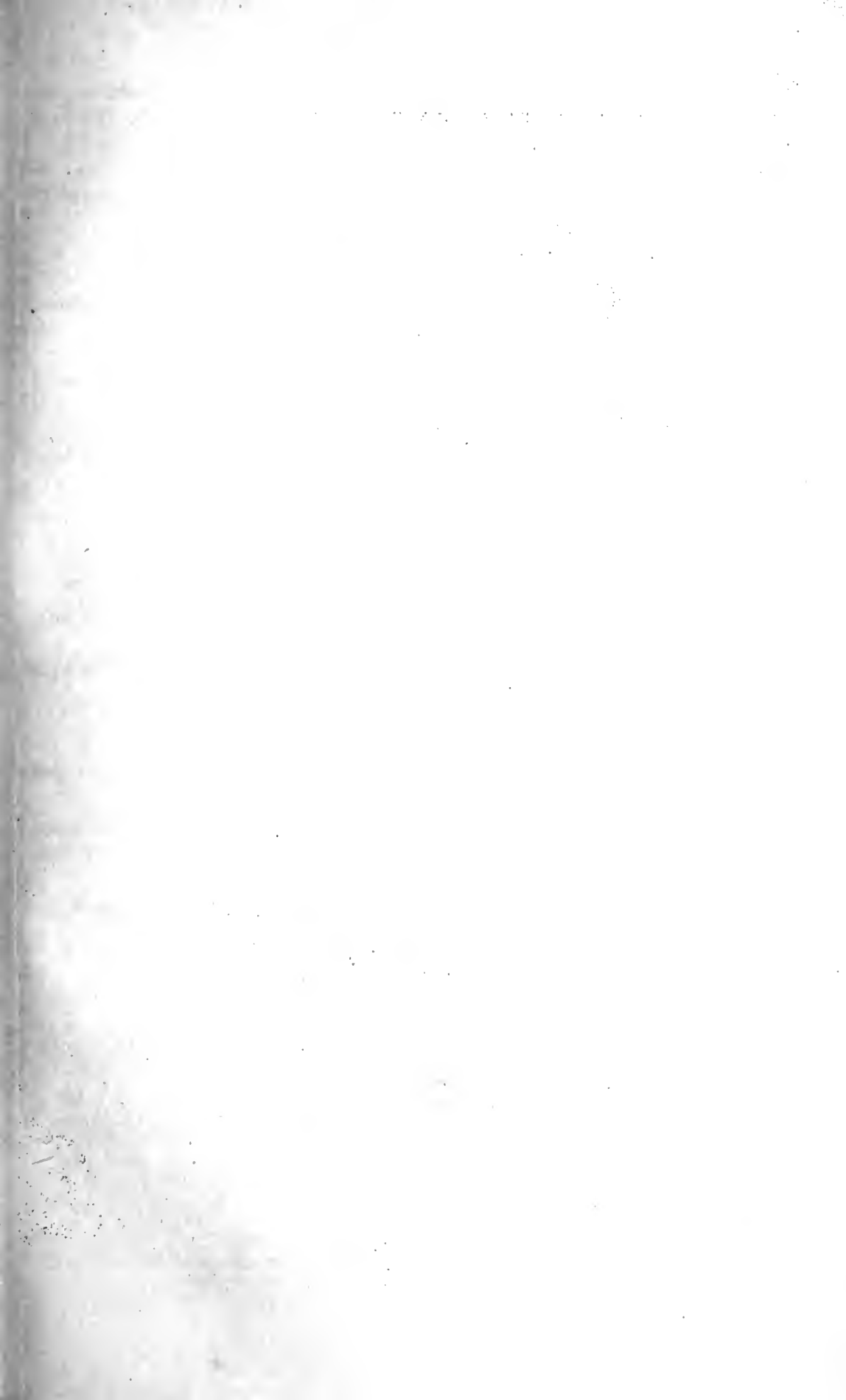
Simultaneously the two men fired.

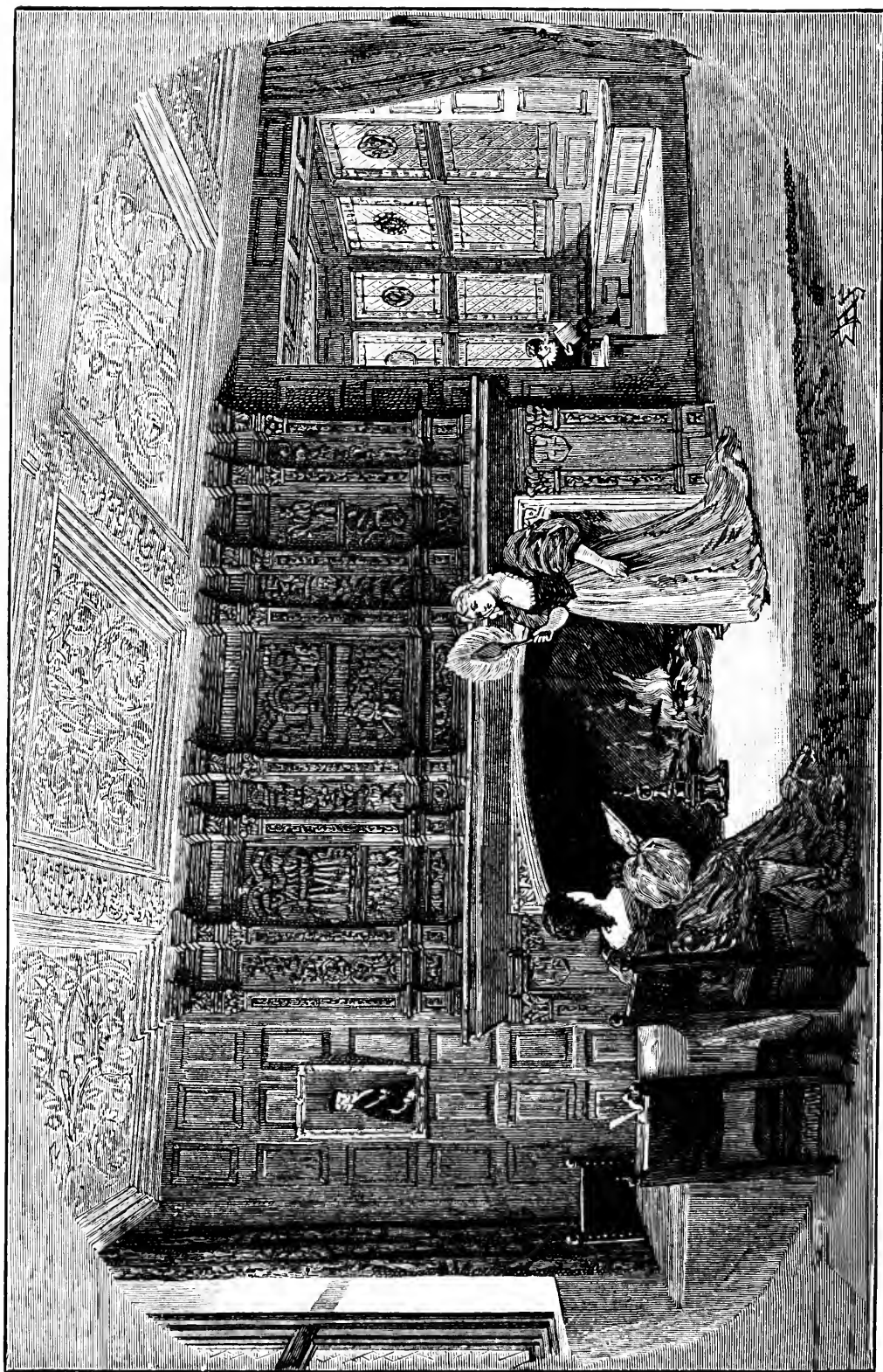
"*Ten*!"

It was a mechanical cry. Anne dropped the pistol from her hand and rushed down the steps, and as she reached the bottom, Dowdeswell's troopers hurried into the room. But the Cavalier and the Roundhead—who had loved Mistress Anne so well—lay dead, and above them stood the silent clock pointing to half-past four.

FAYR MADOC







THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR KATHERINE."

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE CONVENT.

THE sun was setting in a variable April sky as Father Ambrose and Vera drove to the convent. The wind was dying down and the clouds, which had been chasing each other merrily during the day, seemed quietly settling themselves, as though the splendour of the setting sun hushed their merriment and rebuked their stormy temper, and they were constrained meekly to assume the glowing golden tint he threw over them, and to conform themselves to his majestic rule.

The nuns were all in chapel except the Mother-Prioress and the portress when Father Ambrose and Vera reached the convent. He left Vera in the fly until the portress was sent away, and then he led her into the hall and presented her to the Prioress, an elderly woman with a sweet face and motherly manner. Vera felt exceedingly uncomfortable in her disguise when confronted with a genuine nun in a dress exactly like the one she was wearing ; but the Mother-Prioress set her at ease at once ; she took her hands, kissed her on both cheeks and assured her she was very welcome and that she would keep her secret faithfully.

"But you must change your dress before the others see you," said the Prioress with a rather scandalised air.

"Oh, yes ! I am afraid it was very wrong of me to put it on, but I did not think of that ; I was so anxious to escape," said Vera, and she looked so sweetly penitent that the Prioress forgave her immediately.

"Come with me, then, for we have no time to lose. Father Ambrose shall see you as early as he likes to-morrow morning after you have had a good night's rest."

Vera was then taken upstairs into a small bedroom plainly furnished but beautifully clean, and commanding a lovely view of the sea with Mont St. Michel rising out of it. Here she laid aside the

habit and put on the only dress the convent could offer her—a plain black one ; which in Vera's private opinion must have come out of the ark. However, she meekly donned it and smiled when the Prioress said it was a little penance for having worn the habit. Nor did she raise any objection to the black lace veil the mother pinned on her head and told her she must always wear during her stay in the convent.

"To-morrow we will send for a dressmaker and you shall order yourself a dress. I am afraid you will find it rather dull, for we have no other visitors just now, but we will try to make you comfortable."

"I don't think I shall mind the dullness. May I go where I like inside the convent?" asked Vera.

"No ; you can't come inside the enclosure without leave from the Bishop ; the visitors' rooms are not in the enclosed part ; but you may go all over the garden. And we are close to you at night ; so you need not be nervous."

"I am not at all nervous ; but you will let me have my meals with you, won't you?" said Vera, whose ignorance of convent life was very great.

"My dear child, no ; we allow no one except ourselves or other religious in our refectory ; but I will give you leave to come into my room at recreation and to the seculars' part of the chapel whenever you like."

"But I shan't see any of the nuns there, shall I?" said Vera.

"Not very well. Can you sing?"

"Oh, yes ; and I can play the organ too."

"Then you shall come into the organ-loft ; you will see there as well or better than if you were in the choir ; and if you like, you may help us in our music. The organist will be delighted if you will sometimes take her place."

"Oh ! I should love it. It is so kind of you to take me in. If I can be of any use I shall be so pleased. And I will try to be very good," said Vera sweetly.

The nun smiled and kissed her and thought how beautiful she was. And then she could not resist the temptation to pin some roses from a vase in the room, as fresh and sweet and blooming as Vera herself, on to her dress.

"Would you like to come into the chapel now? Your supper won't be ready just yet, and we shall be in time for the 'Salve.'"

Vera assented to this and presently found herself in the organ-loft looking down on the beautiful chapel, as the setting sun poured through the coloured windows casting gleams of coloured light across the sanctuary and over the black veils of the white-robed nuns. At the bottom of the chapel stood a large marble angel holding a stoup of holy water, and as Vera looked down upon it the angel's wings seemed to glimmer with iridescent light like an opal as a ray of sunlight which pierced a coloured window rested for a moment upon

them. Vera almost expected to see the angel raise its glorious wings and fly away, but it remained motionless at its post as a sentinel on duty.

Just then the nuns all rose from their seats in the choir and walked in procession round the chapel headed by two novices in white veils carrying lighted candles in brass candlesticks, singing as they walked the "Salve Regina" in Dominican plain chant. Presently they knelt down, two only remaining standing, and these two walked between the long rows of kneeling nuns and sprinkled them with holy water ; then they rose, the procession re-formed and they returned to their places singing St. Dominic's hymn.

Then the altar was lighted up for the Benediction, a priest came in, and falling on her knees Vera's clear young voice rang out in the "Salutaris Hostia" like an angel's, to the amazement of the nuns in the choir, who were too devout to gratify their curiosity by looking up to see where the voice came from. And then a little later when in the solemn hush the bell rang and Benediction was given, a sense of rest and peace, in spite of her troubles, fell over Vera, such as she had never felt before.

In a few days Vera was the pet of the convent and was allowed to do pretty much what she pleased ; so that when Father Ambrose came to say good-bye on Monday morning, before he started for Woodford, she assured him that if only she could know for a certain fact that Captain Raleigh was assured of her innocence she should be perfectly happy in the convent. She promised Father Ambrose to remain with the nuns until he returned. She could not write to her lover, because of her promise to her father ; otherwise she would have done so, and have sent the letter to Norwich to greet him on his arrival in England ; for according to her calculation he would just be on his way home from India.

Little did she think he was that night sleeping only a stone's-throw from the convent ; but perhaps this fact accounted for her troubled dreams. She dreamt he was at Woodford, and that her step-mother was trying to persuade him that she had taken the diamonds and shot Mark Brown ; and in her dream she felt she must go back at once to Woodford and deny the charge. She must go alone, since Father Ambrose was gone ; and therefore she must go disguised, as she had come.

She rose from her bed in her sleep, and dressed herself in the white habit and scapular which had been left in her room. The veil and guimpe and the long black cloak were gone and she searched in vain for them, having a vague notion that her costume was incomplete, and then at last she gave up the search. With her long golden hair rippling in wavy masses down her shoulders, she took a lighted candle in her hand, opened her bedroom door and walked downstairs.

When she reached the hall she found the hall door was bolted and

locked, and happily the key was not in the lock. She searched in the hall and in the portress's little room, but she could not find it; and at last she seemed to accept the fact that escape that way was impossible. Then she remembered in her sleep that she could get into the garden by a side door, and mechanically she turned to go towards it, forgetting that there was no exit from the high walled-in garden to the road. Her one need seemed to be to get outside the convent into the open air; and turning into the enclosure, oblivious of the fact that it was forbidden ground, she walked down the cloisters towards the garden door.

As she walked down the empty cloister, the distant sound of the nuns' voices reciting a psalm as they returned from their night office filled the air, but the sound did not reach Vera's sleeping ears. Every sense and every nerve were concentrated on one object, namely, to reach the open air. Suddenly, as she turned a corner and entered the corridor which led from the chapel, she came face to face with the long procession of nuns, looking very ghostly in the dimly-lighted corridor, wrapped in their long black cloaks and walking in pairs, their hands folded under their scapulars; but Vera did not see them. She walked on in the centre of the corridor till she reached the advancing procession, which divided somewhat abruptly to let her pass. Some of the frightened nuns thought they were meeting the ghost of one of their community long since dead; some of them recognised Vera, in spite of her habit and the strange look in her open eyes; but all were too well disciplined to speak in the cloisters, where silence was the rule. So she passed unhindered down the long lines of veiled figures until she reached the Prioress, who, startled as she was, could scarcely contain her delight at being a witness among many others of Vera's somnambulistic powers.

"It is Miss Tempest walking in her sleep; we must follow her," whispered the Prioress to the nun at her side; and turning round they left the other nuns to go back to their beds, while they followed where Vera chose to lead them.

On went Vera, her long golden hair streaming in heavy masses down her back long past her waist, down the now dark cloister; for the nuns had extinguished the gas as they passed, and her solitary candle only made the darkness visible. She glided past the chapel from which the nuns had just emerged, and then turned down another long corridor at the end of which was the door into the garden. Here she stopped and tried to open the door, but this too was locked and the key was not in the lock. Vera rattled the handle in vain, and then she put the lighted candle down on the floor and with both her little white hands drew back all the heavy bolts, and then tried in vain to open the locked door. Failing, she wrung her hands in despair, crying out as she did so:

"Arthur! Arthur! the door is locked! I can't come to you! Oh, what shall I do!—what shall I do!"

"Come back to bed," said the Prioress, gently taking one of Vera's hands in hers and giving the candle she had picked up to the other nun.

Her touch seemed to calm the sleeping girl, though it did not wake her; and she submitted to be led back to her room, sighing and sobbing as she went. Here the two nuns undressed her and put her to bed without waking her; but they were afraid to leave her alone, lest she should walk again; so they took it in turns to sit by her side until the bell rang for the nuns to rise, when they thought her safe.

Vera slept till nine o'clock and was then awakened by one of the lay sisters, who brought her her breakfast and a message that the Mother-Prioress wished to see her when she was dressed. Wondering what this could mean, and half afraid she was to be reproved for her late rising, Vera made haste over her breakfast and toilette. While she was thus occupied she noticed that the white serge habit, which had been in her room the night before, was gone, the Prioress having taken it away; but though surprised at this, Vera had not the slightest recollection of what had happened during the night and was amazed when the Prioress told her.

"Did all the nuns see me?" she asked.

"Yes; thirty-four of us can bear witness to your somnambulism; but as we can't go to England to give our evidence, I am not sure that it will be of much use."

"Oh, yes, it will! It will convince Father Ambrose and my father and Captain Raleigh; and I don't care what the rest of the world believes about me very much," said Vera.

Father Ambrose returned to Avranches a few days later, and his first action on arriving was to go and see Vera and tell her about the trial, and Captain Raleigh's arrival in England, and his meeting with her in her disguise.

"You were very near being severely punished for that freak; but see, I have brought you some letters: one from Raleigh and one from your father," said Father Ambrose; and Vera was soon too much occupied with her letters to think of anything else.

Whilst she was reading them the Prioress came in and gave the priest an account of Vera's sleep-walking in the cloisters, and received a slight reproof for not having written to him directly it happened and told him of it.

"It is most important evidence. I must telegraph to Raleigh and the Archdeacon, and say thirty-four people have seen her walking in her sleep; details to follow by letter. Vera is by no means out of this scrape yet. Mark Brown's case comes before the bench next Tuesday; but even if his perjury is proved, Vera's innocence is not established until the diamonds are found."

"Oh, I am so happy," interrupted Vera. "My father has given his consent to my engagement, and as soon as this case is settled we

are to be married. They, papa and Captain Raleigh I mean, seem to think I had better remain where I am for the present, as Mrs. Ryot-Tempest still believes I stole her diamonds and will prosecute me if she can."

"Never mind, my dear child; be patient and it will all come right in time. We will take care of you till you can go home, if you can put up with this quiet life," said the Prioress.

"I shan't mind the quiet life now I can write to Arthur every day; and to occupy myself I shall begin to get some of my trousseau," said Vera, looking as bright and happy as if no such things as false accusations existed.

Certainly love is the most absorbing of all the passions, thought Father Ambrose as he left the convent and pondered over Vera's utter indifference to her other troubles now that her love trouble was over; though to him it seemed that to be accused of stealing and shooting a man was a much greater trouble than to be separated from a lover.

But then Father Ambrose forgot that love troubles are the hardest of all troubles to bear; partly perhaps because they come before the heart is schooled to suffering, partly because if love's joys are the sweetest it is only fair love's sorrows should be the bitterest in a world where, on the whole, justice in the long run is pretty fairly meted out.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MARK BROWN FALLS OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

REUBEN FOREMAN left the police-court the day Mark's action against Vera was heard a happier man than he had been for months. His heart was lighter, for the burden of a secret sin had been removed. Once more he could look his fellow-men in the face and feel they knew the worst of him; he had nothing now to conceal from them. If they still respected him his conscience could no longer reproach him with being unworthy of their respect. Unworthy he was no doubt in a certain sense, but at any rate his neighbours would now honour him with their eyes open; it would be no blind admiration, for he had laid bare his secret soul with its stain of sin upon it to their eyes.

If, on the other hand, he had to suffer from not being held in such good repute as formerly, this would only be his due; he would gladly accept the penalty as part of his punishment. But on leaving the police-court he was greeted with the greatest cordiality and not a little admiration by all who knew him. He found people admired him more for his public confession than they blamed him for his sin. Even Norah, who was not given to paying him compliments and was always inclined to throw cold water on his religious fervour, said as he accompanied her to the station:

"You are a good man, Reuben; a deal better than I gave you credit for."

Reuben smiled, for he had a vein of humour in his composition, and his sister's criticism struck him as quaint when he had just been trying to prove how wicked he was. His nature was a noble one, therefore his lapse into sin made him more watchful than before. True it is that the highest natures fall the lowest, but then they rise to a higher level than that from which they fell, by their penitence: they rebound after their contact with the earth.

On the following Sunday Reuben felt rather nervous when he entered his chapel; but he need not have done so; he was treated with as much reverence as ever, only when he came to take his Bible-class he found the young men and boys who attended it less reserved than formerly. They seemed to feel there was a bond of sympathy between them and their teacher which, if it had previously existed, they had been unconscious of. Reuben, upright, pious, stern as he was, was after all like them; liable to the same temptations, liable also to fall; and this knowledge drew them nearer to him; so true is it that to a man's friends his faults sometimes endear him more than his virtues. It is easier to talk to a man on the same platform with ourselves than to one standing on a pedestal above us.

From that time Reuben's influence over his class was stronger than before; for sympathy is a very great power for good; it is a rope which has saved many a drowning soul.

The next evening Reuben was at the forge rather later than usual, having some work to finish after his men had left at six; and he was still at his anvil when he received a visit from a tramp, who stopped at the door and looked in as he passed through the village. He was tidily dressed in corduroy trousers, a velveteen coat and a sealskin cap, but his appearance nevertheless struck the blacksmith as somewhat suspicious, for the man had a young face and yet his hair and beard were almost white. He made a few commonplace remarks, and Reuben, who was always on the look out for a soul to save, encouraged him to talk, hoping to direct the conversation into a convenient channel for his purpose. The blacksmith had just remarked that his furnace was almost out and was about to follow up this leading observation with a reference to another furnace whose fire will never be quenched, when the man somewhat suddenly asked if Reuben could tell him where Captain Raleigh was staying.

"Maybe I can; but why do you want to know?" said Reuben.

"He is the lover, isn't he, of Miss Tempest up at the Rectory? Ah! She's a plucky lady, she is; and as handsome as she's plucky," returned the man.

"Well, I don't know that there is any harm in saying he and Miss Vera do walk together, but I don't see what business it is of yours, my man," said Reuben.

"Perhaps not, but I have some very particular business with the

gentleman all the same, and it is business that won't do the young lady any harm neither; so if you'll tell me where I can find him, you'll save me some trouble, maybe, and I'll take it kindly of you."

"He is staying up at the priest's house next to the convent; he is a Papist, more's the pity," said Reuben.

"Thank you, I'll wish you good evening," said the man abruptly, leaving the forge and starting off in exactly the opposite direction to the one Reuben had indicated, at a pace by no means consistent with his grey hairs and beard.

Reuben left his anvil, and going outside the door looked after his strange guest for a minute or two, shading his eyes with his hand from the sun, now about to dip behind the hill the man was mounting.

"He seems familiar to me, somehow; I wonder where I have seen him before. It is getting late; I'll shut up shop and go home; perhaps I shall come across him again—he has gone my way," said Reuben to himself.

Accordingly the blacksmith shut up his forge, lighted his pipe and set off up the hill to his cottage. As he passed the Rectory gate, to his surprise he saw Mark Brown leaning on it in earnest conversation with his late visitor.

"Strange! I know I have seen that man before, somewhere. What can he have to do with Mark Brown, I wonder? No good, that is certain. I'll walk down after supper and call on the Captain and see if my gentleman has been to see him," thought Reuben as he mounted the hill-side in the evening light.

It had been a glorious day—too hot for early May; and almost the first real spring day they had had that year. The new grass was of a vivid green, the more brilliant in contrast with the still numerous leafless trees whose bursting buds were only waiting for another such day of sunshine to put forth their tender leaves. Here and there a sycamore was already in leaf, and its colour, if as brilliant as the grass, was a more delicate green; the larches too were shooting out their new needle-like leaves, bristling with sprigs and casting a shade of emerald green which deepened every day over the hill-side; the swampy meadows near the canal were gleaming with the burning gold of the wild marsh marigold; the fields above were yellow with cowslips and primroses; the canal banks were strewn with the untidy blossoms of the "faint sweet cuckoo flowers;" all nature was awakening from her long winter sleep, and the birds were chanting a reveille in notes of passionate joy.

If the larks ceased for awhile as they dropped to earth to attend to their household duties, the thrushes filled up the interim; if the thrushes grew weary towards evening the blackbirds took up their song; and all the while the sober linnets and finches murmured in their sweet undertones an accompaniment to the more elaborate performance of the other birds, while the cuckoo sang her monotonous song unceasingly. Reuben was used to all these sights

and sounds and paid as little heed to them as most men of his class usually do ; but suddenly he stopped and listened, for he fancied he heard the nightingale. Yes, there is no mistaking that song ; the nightingale had come, but her song was not yet perfect ; the notes of liquid sweetness dropped from her passionate soul in short rippling passages ; later on her song will lengthen, her ecstasy will be sustained ; this evening's effort was only a foretaste of what was to come as the days lengthened.

"It is the nightingale, sure enough, but not in full song. It isn't a bird, it is a spirit ; the spirit of spring," said Reuben as he listened. "I wish my Janet were here to listen to it, she always loved the nightingale ; but the Lord wills otherwise. She is happier out in America than she would be here."

And then Reuben stopped, and taking off his hat prayed, not that Janet might come home to him, but that God's will might be done in the matter. He was beginning to feel that the best prayer is not, as most people imagine, to try to bend God's will to man's, but to bend our will to God's. This is true prayer, for this is true union, and the end and object of real prayer is union with God.

Reuben was beginning to understand the secret of true happiness, his public confession had raised him to a higher level in the spiritual life ; he had begun to feel that to will what God wills is real happiness, and when once a man realises that, he carries his heaven about with him. He has an antidote for every pain, a salve for every wound, comfort for every sorrow, consolation for every grief. We need no longer distress ourselves about the happiness of such a man, though he may still have many troubles. The path to this paradise is a stormy one even for those who are saints by nature ; for those who are saints by grace it is a fiery furnace ; but it is a heaven which can be entered even on this side of the grave, and the blacksmith by a miracle of grace had entered it.

The nightingale and the thoughts it brought put the stranger out of Reuben's mind for awhile, but after his supper he remembered him, and set out to call on Captain Raleigh : a task by no means congenial to him, for he was a bigoted Baptist and regarded Catholics as little better than heathen idolaters. But for Vera's sake he overcame his prejudice, thinking that in all probability his strange visitor had something to do with the diamond robbery.

The result of this visit was that at eleven o'clock that night the Captain and the blacksmith walked up to the Rectory together, the former carrying a riding-whip instead of a walking-stick. When they were near the house, Lion barked, but a word from Raleigh silenced him. He then went round to the back-door, where he remained like a sentry, while Reuben hid behind a tree from which he could command a full view of the front of the house. There for the moment we will leave them in order to be present at Mark Brown's interview with the bearded stranger.

Mark had been engaged in sweeping the drive when he was accosted by a familiar voice, and on looking round found himself close to an unfamiliar face.

"Well, Mark, and how are you getting on?"

"None the better for seeing you," returned Mark, with his habitual courtesy.

"How is your arm? Good shot your young lady is, isn't she?" continued the man with a grin.

Mark swore an audible oath.

"Go ahead, your time is getting short; your case begins to-morrow, doesn't it?" asked the stranger.

"What has that to do with you?" said Mark savagely.

"Nothing; but it would be rather awkward for you if that fellow Freeman were to turn up, wouldn't it?"

Mark turned as pale as death and leaned over the gate to support himself, for his knees shook under him.

"That was a shabby trick you played him, stealing those diamonds before you handed him the case," said the man, who was on the opposite side of the gate to Mark, and was standing with his arms folded on the top of it.

"It is a lie; I never touched the diamonds," said Mark. "Freeman had them and never gave me so much as a shilling for my share in the work."

"That is false; the case was empty," interrupted the stranger.

"How do you know that?" said Mark in astonishment.

"Because I picked it up. Look here," and the man pulled off his sealskin cap and with it his false grey hair and beard, and showed the clean-shaven face of Freeman.

"Freeman!" ejaculated Mark, in a terror-stricken voice.

"Yes, I am Freeman. And just listen here, Mark Brown: you hand them diamonds over to me to-day and you'll never hear of me again; refuse to do so and you'll hear me give evidence against you to-morrow; that is what I am down here for. Now, I'll give you five minutes to decide. Hand me the diamonds and it will be all right for you; refuse, and I go straight from here to the Captain and turn Queen's evidence against you to save the young lady. Which is it to be?"

"I can't give you the diamonds; I have not seen them; I swear I have not," said Mark.

"You swore falsely the other day. It is no use trying that game on with me. Give me the diamonds or I go to the Captain."

"I have not seen them; I have not touched them," whimpered Mark in an agony of fear.

"All right; I am off to Captain Raleigh. I'll leave you my wig as a legacy, for I am not sure that you are not speaking the truth for once in your life; and if so, we have both been made fools of by some one cleverer than either of us. Anyhow, if I were you, I'd be absent when they want me to-morrow." And before Mark had sufficiently re-

covered himself to attempt to pursue him, Freeman was running down the hill at a break-neck pace, leaving the wig and beard on the gate.

As a drowning man will catch at a straw, so Mark seized the false hair. It was the straw which might save him. In it he might be able to escape from Woodford before his case was opened the next day ; for escape he must or be committed for trial for perjury since Freeman was going to turn Queen's evidence against him. He was an arrant coward, and the prospect of penal servitude which might well have alarmed a braver man, terrified him. Submit to it he could not ; escape from it he must. He seized the wig and beard, and taking off his cap, put it on his red head, and then walked down to the canal to see by his reflection in the water if the disguise were sufficient protection. He came to the conclusion that it was. No one, he thought, would recognise him, and his first impulse was to throw down his broom and start off then and there across the country to a distant station and there take a ticket for London. He had just sufficient money in his pocket to take him there. But then he remembered he had four or five pounds at the Rectory, and desperate as his case was, he was not inclined to sacrifice that ; he loved money too dearly to part with it so easily.

No, he would escape, but he must go back and get his money and as many of his belongings as he could carry with him ; so he put the false hair in his breast pocket and returned to finish his work. The servants all watched him too closely for him to hope to escape until night, and even then he would find it difficult, for by the Archdeacon's orders the butler now slept in his room, and always took the precaution of locking the door and putting the key under his pillow. However, Mark knew the servants had all sworn he should not run away and forfeit his bail if they could help it, and he was given to understand that the Fuchsia-bells, Holmes and the kitchen-maid took it in turns to watch for so many hours each night lest he should evade the butler's guard.

This was decidedly awkward ; but as Mark went home to supper with his wits sharpened by fear, he hit upon a plan by which he trusted to render his self-constituted gaolers incompetent to fulfil their task. He would drug them. This would not be difficult, for it was his duty to draw the supper beer for the kitchen, and he knew there was a bottle of laudanum in the Archdeacon's dressing-room. When he got to the Rectory he found, as he expected, all the servants busy, for it was the dinner-hour ; the butler and Mary were waiting at table, the cook dishing up the dinner with the kitchen-maid's assistance, and Holmes was as usual, at this time, out in the shrubbery with a lover ; so Mark had no difficulty in going upstairs unobserved and getting the laudanum. He then went to his own room, put all his money in his pocket and packed his best suit of clothes and a few other things into a bundle, which he hid under his bed to be ready for him when he started that night. Then he changed his

clothes as he always did before supper, for he had to go into the drawing-room to prayers before he went to bed. By the time he had made all these arrangements the bell rang for the servants' supper, and he went down to the cellar to draw the beer.

He filled a large jug and then took a long draught out of it, intending to decline any at supper. Then he poured a good dose of laudanum into the jug and refilled it, leaving the laudanum-bottle in the cellar, resolving that if they wanted any more beer they should also have some more laudanum. The beer was drunk without any comment, and none troubled themselves about Mark's abstinence, cook cynically remarking :

"If he does not want any beer, there is all the more for them that does."

At prayers Mark had the satisfaction of seeing the butler nod two or three times in spite of the strenuous efforts he made to keep awake, and when they all rose from their knees, Mary had to be nudged to get up, sleep having overcome her devotion. They none of them, however, suspected anything amiss, but attributed their sleepiness to their hard work, and hurried up to bed somewhat earlier than usual.

Mark was obliged to go through the farce of undressing and getting into bed, but before his head was on his pillow the butler was sleeping soundly, as his snores testified. Mark put out the candle and redressed himself, taking care to put on the wig Freeman had lent him, and then he sat down to wait till he should judge it safe to make his escape. The house was perfectly quiet, and soon after eleven o'clock had struck Mark determined to start. He had no idea how long the effect of the laudanum would last, and he wanted to be safely off the premises before it wore off. He crept across the room to the butler's bed and succeeded in obtaining the key from under his pillow without waking him. He unlocked the door as gently as he could, and then, with his boots in one hand and his bundle in the other, he crept on to the landing. Not a sound except the butler's snores was to be heard, but from the room at the head of the stairs, the door of which was open, streamed a light : this was the bedroom of the Fuchsia-bells, and had his case not been so desperate Mark would have hesitated to proceed any further ; but the sword of penal servitude which was hanging over his head gave him courage, and reflecting that Mary must be asleep since the laudanum had taken effect on her at prayers, and that if cook were awake he was probably a match for her and certainly would not scruple to silence her in the best way which suggested itself, he went on.

• When he got opposite to the door he saw cook, still dressed, sitting by the bed-side, where she had evidently stationed herself to keep guard over him, but drowsiness had overpowered her and she had fallen face forwards on to the bed, and was sleeping soundly. In-

wardly chuckling at his own cleverness, Mark slipped past the door and down the stairs ; but on reaching the back-door he found the key had been taken out of it, so that he could not open it. He went round to the hall-door and it was while he was there that Lion barked, otherwise he would have heard him. But he found it impossible to unbolt the front-door without making a noise, so he decided he must escape by the scullery-window. This was a sash window, close to the ground and protected by shutters, which he easily opened. This done, he threw out his bundle, and then, having put on his boots, vaulted out of it into Captain Raleigh's arms, where he met with a much warmer reception than he anticipated or desired.

As they walked up the hill that night Reuben had seen a dangerous light in the Captain's dark brown eyes, and now and then a twitch or two about his mouth which the blacksmith knew meant that he did not intend Mark's punishment to be slight if he caught him. It was not ; the blows fell thick and fast as Raleigh held his victim by the collar like a dog, and the lithe, strong riding-whip curled round Mark's body and legs till he howled for mercy like a whipped hound.

Reuben heard the cries from the front of the house, and arrived just in time to see Raleigh administer the final lash as he let the howling Mark go.

"There, you scoundrel, that is the most satisfactory piece of work I have done for many a day. So you were running away, were you ? We will wait till he has recovered a little, Reuben, and then we will take him down to the police-station for the night. Meanwhile, I'll go round and wake someone to come and fasten this window, if you will keep guard over that creature," said Captain Raleigh, and his tone of utter contempt cut even the wretched Mark, who was rubbing his smarting sides and legs and dancing with pain. He recovered himself somewhat on finding he was left alone with Reuben, and, resolving to throw himself on the blacksmith's pity as a last resource, began to implore him to let him escape before the Captain returned.

"Let me go, Mr. Foreman ; let me go ; for the love of Heaven, let me go."

"No, Mark, it's better for you to be punished here for a few years than hereafter for ever," said Reuben. Mark felt in his waistcoat pocket and pulled out five sovereigns.

"Mr. Foreman, these are all I have in the world ; you are welcome to them if you'll let me go before the Captain comes back," said Mark, tendering the sovereigns to Reuben most reluctantly ; but his case was he felt a most desperate one.

"What do you take me for, Mark ? Do you think I would do wrong for the sake of five pounds ?" said Reuben scornfully.

"Mr. Foreman, remember how I loved your Janet : for her sake let me go," said Mark.

Reuben had been standing with folded arms, leaning against the door-post, till Mark uttered Janet's name ; when he sprang forward,

picked up the whip Raleigh had thrown on the ground, and seizing the wretched Mark raised it in the air. But he changed his intention and let it fall harmlessly by his side as he exclaimed :

"You good-for-nothing thief ; dare to mention my daughter's name to me again and I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Mercy, mercy, Mr. Foreman ; I'll never mention it again as long as I live," whimpered Mark, falling on his knees at Reuben's feet in an agony of fear, for he had no desire to feel the weight of the blacksmith's heavy arm.

"Get up and bear your punishment like a man if you are convicted, as you certainly will be ; so you had better make up your mind to that and give up all hope of escape. The police are on the look-out for you, so you would have no chance if I did let you go. Your wisest plan is to go quietly to the police-station with us when the Captain comes back," said Reuben. And then the opportunity for improving the occasion and endeavouring to save Mark's soul was too good to be lost, so he hastened to seize it.

"Mark Brown, by this time to-morrow night you'll be in gaol, or I am mistaken, for bail will be refused now you have tried to escape ; your cell will be small and not too light ; your bed will be hard, and the bolts will be strong ; but remember, unless you repent of your sins and believe, your prison-cell will be heaven compared to the place you'll be sent to for ever and ever when you die. Remember——" But here Reuben was interrupted by Captain Raleigh, who returned to say he could not make anyone hear.

"They must be very sound sleepers ; I have rung the bell at least a dozen times. But as no one is stirring let us try the back-door ; the servants no doubt sleep this side of the house ; there is a knocker as well as a bell here," said Raleigh, proceeding to knock and ring loudly, but with no result.

"It is very strange ; they must hear all this noise, one would think," he continued, when they had spent five or ten minutes in unavailing knocks.

Mark now began to tremble with a new fear. It was very evident the laudanum was taking effect on the servants ; suppose he had given them an overdose, and one or perhaps more should never wake again, he would be a murderer ! In his abject terror he felt inclined to confess what he had done, but fear of another thrashing prevented him ; future hanging seemed preferable to immediate flogging after his recent experience.

"See, sir, there is a light in this window ; let us throw some gravel up ; that is sure to wake them," said Reuben, pointing to the window of the room the Fuchsia-bells occupied.

Gravel was thrown, but in vain ; the servants slept on ; and after more vain knocking and ringing they went round to the front of the house, Reuben leading Mark lest he should attempt to escape, to see if they could wake the Archdeacon.

"Ask that fellow which is his master's room, Reuben," said Raleigh to the blacksmith, for he could not bring himself to speak to his prisoner.

"That one with the light," said Mark ; upon which Reuben threw some gravel at the window indicated. In a minute it was opened, and the Archdeacon in his night-cap looked out and inquired who was there.

"Only Reuben Foreman and I, Archdeacon ; we caught Mark Brown getting out of the scullery-window, and we have been trying to wake one of the servants to come down and shut it for the last quarter of an hour," said Raleigh.

"But what about Mark ? Has he escaped ?" asked the Archdeacon anxiously.

"No, he is here ; we will take him to the police-station. I am sorry to have disturbed you, but I thought it was not safe to leave the window open. Your servants are sound sleepers indeed," said Raleigh.

"Never mind, I'll shut the window myself. But come to-morrow morning as early as you can, and tell me all about Mark and how you managed to catch him. Don't let him go, Raleigh ; hold him fast for Vera's sake."

"I will, sir, and for your sake and mine too. Good-night. I hope you will sleep well after being disturbed, for you have a trying day before you to-morrow ; I'll be with you early."

"Good-night," said the Archdeacon, and the window closed ; and Mark's hope that his master would try to wake the other servants was gone.

Mark was shortly after duly lodged at the police-station, where he passed a sleepless night—dread lest he should find in the morning that he had added murder to the list of his crimes keeping him awake. A guilty conscience is a wonderful quickener of the imaginative powers ; Mark's imagination was not naturally either quick or powerful, but "conscience which doth make cowards of us all" so sharpened his faculties that he easily pictured to himself the scene the next morning at the Rectory if the butler were found dead in his bed, or the Fuchsia-bells so fast asleep that no human power could wake them. Then he saw the laudanum bottle discovered by the beer cask, where he, fool as he was, had left it. And then he heard the crime of murder fastened on him : he saw himself brought before judge and jury and declared guilty of murder ; he heard the judge pronounce sentence, he imagined himself face to face with death, he mounted the scaffold in imagination, and felt the hangman adjusting the rope round his neck. And then in a white heat he turned on his hard bed and tried to sleep.

Strange that consciousness of sin and fear of the consequences should have the power of producing a train of thought lasting for nearly half an hour in a mind rarely capable of any thought at all

beyond the passing trivial thoughts common to us all, which occupy so much of our time. The truth is, if we analyse our thoughts we shall find the most concentrated thoughts, the most consecutive thoughts, the most sustained thoughts, are those of which our own ego is the pivot round which they turn ; the most thoughtless, the most frivolous, the most uneducated, the most undisciplined minds can generally manage to spend many consecutive minutes in deep thought on this topic of all-absorbing interest to each individual.

But to return to Mark. If he could have known the next morning that at eight o'clock no one was stirring at the Rectory he would have been still more alarmed, but this was the case nevertheless. The servants slept through the alarm set at half-past six in each of their rooms ; Holmes was accustomed to be called an hour later by Mary ; but no Mary came to call her, so she slept on. The Archdeacon had laid awake till six after Raleigh woke him the night before and then fell asleep ; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was a late riser and never attempted to stir till Holmes brought her a cup of tea at eight o'clock. On this Tuesday morning, however, eight o'clock struck and no one woke ; the hall-clock chimed the quarter-past and still the household slept. At half-past, however, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest woke, and finding how late it was, rang her bell violently for Holmes. She continued to ring again and again, but no one answered. And then, remembering the trial began at ten, she jumped up, and putting on her slippers and dressing-gown went to see why she was thus neglected.

To her amazement the house was as still as if it were midnight, and looking over the stairs she saw the doors were still shut ; evidently no one was up. Fuming with rage at the laziness of the servants she went into the hall, seized the big dinner-bell and went to the servants' rooms ringing it violently as she walked, and making noise enough to wake the dead. It succeeded in rousing the drugged servants, and in ten minutes' time Holmes stood by her mistress's side full of apologies.

"If you please, ma'am, we all overslept ourselves, and we all have bad headaches, and Mark Brown has run away, and we think he must have put something in the beer to make us sleep last night."

"Don't talk such folly, Holmes ; Mark is up and about his work. He is the only one of you worth his salt. Oversleeping yourselves indeed in this disgraceful style ! Go and tell the others that unless breakfast is on the table as the clock strikes nine, you, every one of you, leave this day month."

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's servants were afraid of her, so her message had a stimulating effect on them. Breakfast was nearly ready at nine, and finished by half-past, when Captain Raleigh arrived. But that did not deter Mrs. Tempest from administering a good scolding to the household when they assembled for prayers, which on this

occasion were dispensed with, as the Archdeacon was anxious to get to the police-court in good time. He said nothing to his wife about Mark's frustrated attempt at escape; indeed, breakfast was eaten as most of their meals now were, in almost dead silence, except that to-day Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was so struck with the Archdeacon's pallor that she urged him to make a good breakfast, and suggested he was not well enough to go to the trial.

"I am not well, but I am going," said the Archdeacon, quietly, but in so decided a tone that his wife knew he meant to go if he died in the Court, and he looked so ill that she half-feared he might do so.

A fit of compunction seized her. It was in her power to remove a great part of his anxiety; it was her duty to do so, for had she not vowed to comfort him in trouble? It was also her secret wish, for since the Archdeacon had treated her with this cold civility, she longed to bring him back to her feet. She looked at him again and saw how ill and careworn he looked, and she resolved to tell him something that would prove that Vera was innocent of the robbery. She rose from her seat and went to his end of the table; she was pale and the white hand she laid on his chair trembled, for she was a proud woman, and the confession she was about to make required a great effort.

"Ryot, I have something to say to you," she began, when the door opened and the butler announced:

"If you please, sir, Captain Raleigh is in your study."

At this announcement the demon of jealousy awoke again within her, and removing her hand she went back to her seat with a look of malicious anger on her face, saying as she went:

"It is of no consequence; another time will do."

And that confession was not made.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE NEW WITNESS.

"WHAT an utter fool!"

The speaker was Mrs. Ryot-Tempest; the person she alluded to in these flattering terms was Mark Brown; the occasion was his attempted escape, an account of which Holmes had just given her mistress while dressing her for the trial.

By an effort of self-control such as she seldom exercised, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest had denied herself the pleasure of being present when the Vicar's case was heard, wisely considering it would have been, to say the least, very bad taste on her part to be present: and she was one of those people who are seldom guilty of any breach of good taste. Like many worldly people, she would rather have broken any commandment in the decalogue than sin against the laws of society; and

though she had little or no control over her temper and her tongue, and never crossed her own inclinations in matters which come under any spiritual jurisdiction, she was nevertheless capable of enduring martyrdom rather than be guilty of bad form. It was a case, one of many, of misapplied force.

Her preparations for attending the trial were as elaborate as if she were the criminal: Holmes accompanied her armed with a smelling-bottle, a fan, eau-de-cologne, a flask of wine and some sandwiches; her dress was plain but handsome, and she wore a thick veil to hide her face, lest she should be betrayed into showing more feeling than was compatible with good breeding.

Two places had been secured for her and her maid, and she rustled into Court just as the magistrates took their seats. Mark Brown was on a platform opposite the bench with a policeman on each side of him, looking as he felt—the most miserable person in the room.

The Archdeacon, Captain Tempest and Captain Raleigh were seated together near the bench. Below them was Mr. Deedes, in apparently excellent spirits; and by his side sat Freeman, whom, however, no one but Reuben and Mark recognised.

Once again that day Mrs. Ryot-Tempest noticed that her husband looked very pale; once again her conscience pricked her and she longed to lessen the burden she knew he was carrying; but she could not get near him now to speak to him had she wished to do so, and the wish was a very fleeting one, dispelled by the sight of Mrs. Canter, whose portly figure and shining face next caught her eye.

“What does that busy, impertinent woman mean by coming here to-day?” thought Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

Apparently that “busy, impertinent woman” meant to observe her critic attentively, for Mrs. Canter’s eyes were fixed on Mrs. Ryot-Tempest during the whole proceedings, to the exceeding indignation of that lady, who frowned and fidgeted in vain under the scrutiny to which she was subjected. Indeed, so far were her frowns and her obvious discomfort from checking Mrs. Canter’s stare, they seemed to encourage it; as indeed they did, for the principal object of Mrs. Canter’s life that day was a strict observation of every change in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest’s countenance. She had come from Marling with the deliberate intention of watching her most closely, and no frowns would deter her from achieving her object. On the contrary, if she annoyed Mrs. Ryot-Tempest by staring at her, all the better: she was delighted to find she could inflict some annoyance upon her, as a slight and wholly inadequate punishment for her conduct to Vera; so she continued to stare in the coolest and most bare-faced manner. Once or twice Reuben, who was sitting by her side, nudged her and whispered “Mind your stops, Norah;” but all the heed Mrs. Canter paid was to continue to stare complacently at her adversary and to say aloud:

"It is no use your nudging, Reuben ; I came to look at her and I mean to do it." Whereupon Reuben subsided and left his sister alone, since his reproofs only drew the attention of others to her conduct.

The truth was Mrs. Canter had all along strongly suspected, in the first place that the diamonds were not stolen at all, and in the next that Mrs. Ryot-Tempest knew where they were. These impressions had grown so strong during the past week that they became fixed ideas. She no longer suspected, she felt certain she was right ; and she meant to watch Mrs. Ryot-Tempest narrowly to see if she betrayed during the progress of the case any sign of being guilty of knowing what had become of the diamonds.

"I shall know by her face whether they are really stolen or not ; and once I know that for certain, I'll find out where they are," said Mrs. Canter to herself as Mrs. Ryot-Tempest took her seat.

The proceedings began by Mr. Deedes stating the case for the prosecution, which involved a great deal of repetition of the action brought against Vera the previous week. Briefly stated, his speech amounted to this :

"I am here," he said, "to ask that this Court may commit for trial at the next assizes Mark Brown for perjury committed here last week, when it will be remembered he brought an action against my client, Miss Ryot-Tempest, for wounding him with intent to kill. That case was dismissed, and I asked for process against him for perjury. On that occasion he swore that he surprised Miss Tempest in the act of handing her step-mother's jewel-case from her father's dressing-room window to Reuben Foreman, whom he also swore to have seen in Miss Tempest's company at a time when, as was then proved by several witnesses, he was elsewhere. That last deposition would be sufficient to prove Mark Brown guilty of perjury. I was also able last week to prove to the satisfaction of this Court that Miss Ryot-Tempest was walking in her sleep when the report of the revolver, fired as she states by Mark Brown himself, awoke her. To-day I am happy to say I am in a position to entirely confirm the evidence of Miss Ryot-Tempest read to the Court last week ; and I have the written testimony of thirty-four ladies who were witnesses a few days ago of Miss Ryot-Tempest's somnambulistic powers, which I will now read before I call a new witness who will prove beyond a doubt that Mark Brown was really guilty of the crime he has impudently endeavoured to fasten upon an innocent young lady."

Here Mr. Deedes read the statement of the nuns and also Vera's account of what had happened on the night of the robbery ; and having then briefly stated that the magistrates had dismissed the case against Vera at once and had granted a summons against Mark Brown for perjury, he called William Freeman, who he stated had turned Queen's evidence.

Mrs. Canter saw Mrs. Ryot-Tempest turn very pale when Freeman was put in the box ; but fear rather than frustrated revenge seemed to

be the feeling which ruled her mind, as she had recourse to her smelling-salts.

"My name is William Freeman, and I came down here three weeks or so ago, because I heard there was a good job to be done here," said Freeman.

"What was it?" asked Mr. Deedes.

"I heard there were some valuable diamonds to be had at Woodford Rectory; so I thought they might as well be mine as anyone else's, and I came down after them. I wasn't in a hurry, for I wanted to do the thing neatly and get off to America with the diamonds; but I was rather short of money, so one day I stopped a young lady I afterwards heard was Miss Tempest, and tried to steal her watch. I should have done it too but for her dog, which, if it had not been for her would have killed me. Well, she let me off, like the kind lady she is. She did me a good turn that day, and I have come here to do her a good turn to-day, if I get seven years for it."

Here the witness paused and wiped his face with a red cotton handkerchief; and the Archdeacon, who had heard from Captain Raleigh that Freeman had turned Queen's evidence, leant forward in his seat and strained every nerve to hear what was said, evidently feeling intensely excited.

"You won't get that if you return the jewels," said Mr. Deedes.

"I have not got them to return, sir."

"Didn't you accomplish the job you were so good as to come down here for, then?"

"I did and I didn't. It was like this: I got to know the groom, Mark Brown, and I persuaded him to help me to get the diamonds. I agreed to give him twenty pounds if he would hand the diamonds to me from the dressing-room window on Easter Tuesday."

"And did he agree to do it?"

"Yes. He was to hand me the case with the jewels soon after eleven o'clock at night if his mistress, who was gone to a party, didn't wear them; if she did he was to do it later, after she came home and was asleep; but I was to be under the window by eleven o'clock, and I was to leave the twenty pounds in the old hollow tree by the canal after I had got the diamonds."

"Did you do so?"

"No, because I did not get the diamonds."

"How was that? Did Mark Brown repent of his bargain?"

"I can't say. All I know is, I was outside the window at eleven, and in a mortal fright lest the mastiff should break loose."

"And what happened?"

"Soon after eleven I saw a light in the room, and then Mark opened the window and asked if I was there. I answered yes, and told him to be quick, for I heard wheels, and then he disappeared for a moment or two and returned with the jewel-case, which he dropped out of the window to me as the carriage drove up to the

door. I caught it and ran off, but I heard the revolver fired before I got ten yards from the house."

"What did you do with the jewel-case containing the diamonds?"

"I carried the case down to the hollow tree as fast as I could run. There I forced the lock and found it empty."

Here the Archdeacon, who had been looking dreadfully ill the whole morning, fainted, and had to be carried out of Court by Captain Raleigh and his brother.

Mrs. Canter thought his wife, whom she continued to watch narrowly, would have fainted also, she turned so pale when Freeman swore the casket was empty; but she had recourse to her flask of wine, and by dint of resisting the inclination to faint very strongly she succeeded in retaining her seat.

"She has got them as sure as I am a laundress," said Mrs. Canter in an undertone to Reuben.

"Who has what?" asked Reuben, who had not followed his sister's train of thought.

"Never mind. I have found out what I wanted to know, so I may as well go and see to the master and send them two gentlemen back. Men are no nurses; and he is so ill I wish Miss Vera were here. You stop to the end, Reuben, and come and tell me before I go home," said Mrs. Canter, and then, much to the satisfaction of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, she left the Court.

"You swear the case was empty when Mark handed it to you?" said Mr. Deedes to Freeman.

"Yes, sir."

"Stand down, then," said Mr. Deedes, who then proceeded to wind up the case for the prosecution in an eloquent speech, in which he held forth largely on the cruel wrong done to his client Miss Vera Tempest by the impudent accusation brought against her by Mark Brown, which he trusted was now entirely refuted by the evidence of the last witness. He so carried the Court and the spectators with him that if judgment could have been given at once there is no doubt Mark would have been then and there committed for trial on the charge of perjury; but his lawyer had first to be heard for the defence.

Mr. Jones now rose, and in a shrewd, clever speech, in which he spared no one's feelings, he maintained that there was no case at all against his client. The only evidence against him was that of a man who, by his own confession, was a thief and a burglar, whose word could not be taken against that of an old, valued, trusted servant like Mark Brown. Had Freeman produced the diamonds, some weight might have been attached to his evidence. The diamonds were kept in the jewel-case; the jewel-case was found, but the diamonds were missing; someone had stolen them. The question was, who? If Freeman, then he had committed perjury, and so vitiated the rest of his evidence. If not Freeman, then who had

stolen them? Here Mr. Jones made an impressive pause, and then proceeded. Clearly only one person could have done so; that person knew where the diamonds were kept; was found in the room in which they were on the night of the robbery after everyone had gone to bed, and had run away from her home the next day, and had, as far as he knew, not been heard of since. There never had been any doubt in his mind as to who was the culprit. From the very first the evidence had pointed to one person. As for the sleep-walking defence, a lamer was never invented; he certainly did not believe one word of it, and he was surprised that anyone should. It was clear that this suspicion was shared by others, or why had the Archdeacon fainted when Freeman swore the jewel-case was empty? Once more he argued there was no case against his client; and he demanded either that the case should be dismissed at once, or that it should be remanded until the diamonds were found. If they were found where he suspected them to be, then the whole case against Mark Brown fell to the ground; and he should appeal to another Court against the judgment in the first case.

Here the magistrates, who were evidently much puzzled what to do, adjourned to another room for luncheon, trusting that sandwiches and sherry would clear their judgment. Captain Raleigh and Captain Tempest, both of whom were evidently in a state of suppressed fury with Mr. Jones, went back to the Rectory to see how the Archdeacon was, and Mr. Deedes retired to consider his final speech to be given when the magistrates returned to the bench. Mrs. Ryot-Tempest remained in the Court, chiefly because she was afraid to go home lest she should come in contact with Mrs. Canter, whom she knew to be in attendance on the Archdeacon. Reuben went outside and discussed the case with various spectators, all of whom, though sympathising with Vera and convinced of her innocence, knowing her as they had done from a child, were agreed that Freeman's evidence had done her more harm than good; since his declaration that the jewel-case was empty had given Mark's lawyer such a golden opportunity for bringing forward all the evidence which pointed to Vera as the culprit.

Even Mr. Deedes, certain as he was of Vera's innocence, inwardly owned the case was going terribly against them; and he half wished he had not persuaded the Archdeacon to bring this action against Mark Brown, but had let the matter end with the first case when Vera was pronounced innocent of wounding Mark.

"If we could only get a clue to where the diamonds are," he muttered to himself as he made some brief note for his speech.

Meanwhile Captain Raleigh and Captain Tempest had been to the Rectory and learnt from Mrs. Canter that the Archdeacon was better; but he had had a very bad attack and the doctor had given strict orders he was to see no one but herself that day, and the less he was told about the trial the better.

"There is no doubt about that, for it is going about as badly as it can," said Raleigh gloomily.

"You don't mean it, sir? Law, what a fool that bench is; I just wish I was sitting upon it," said Mrs. Canter.

"You'd sit upon the magistrates if you were, Norah, and you are no light weight; you'd soon crush them; but it is no joking matter. If we don't find those diamonds, it will be a bad job for Vera," said Captain Tempest.

"Then, gentlemen, I'll find them if I ransack the house from garret to basement, for they are in this house as sure as I am a widow. I suspected it all along, but from what I have seen of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's face and manners to-day I am certain of it."

"Come, Raleigh, we must be off. I cannot believe it, Norah. My belief is that Mark Brown has them, and hid them up on his way to the doctor's to have his arm dressed; but we must look sharp. They begin again at two," said Captain Tempest.

The two gentlemen went off at a brisk walk, leaving Mrs. Canter deep in thought as she mechanically went upstairs to the Arch-deacon. On arriving at the police-court they met Mr. Deedes just going to his place, looking very grave, and as if he had just braced himself up, as indeed he had, to make a great effort on behalf of Vera.

"Will they commit him, do you think, Deedes?" asked Captain Raleigh.

"I doubt it. They know and believe Miss Tempest is innocent; but the evidence is, as that scamp's lawyer has proved, more against her than before. However, we must not despair; I'll do my best, though I may have to keep you here half the afternoon before I finish my final speech."

Shortly after this the magistrates came into Court and the proceedings were resumed by Mr. Deedes rising, amidst a slight rustling and hustling and settling-down of the audience. He waited calmly till this had subsided, and was just about to address the Court when a note was handed to him; which he at once opened and read. His face changed as he read it, and, as soon appeared, his course of action changed also. He turned to Captain Raleigh and smiled triumphantly at him; he gave a scrutinising glance at Mrs. Ryot-Tempest; then he drew himself up, turned to the bench and made the following speech:

"Gentlemen, I was prepared to have inflicted a long speech on the Court in answer to that of Mr. Jones, but the letter I have just received has decided me to change my mind—a privilege, as a rule, only accorded to the gentler sex, but which I trust will on this occasion be granted to me. That letter contains some very important information, of such a nature as to induce me to ask that this case may be adjourned for a week; at the expiration of which I hope to lay such startling evidence before the bench as will induce them to commit the

accused for trial without hesitation. As Mr. Jones has also asked for a remand, I trust the bench will grant my request. I have only to add that since Mark Brown endeavoured to escape last night, I hope he will not be admitted to bail."

There was a buzz of excitement in the Court as Mr. Deedes sat down; a buzz which was speedily quelled by a cry of "Silence." Mark Brown had turned so pale and trembled so that he had to be accommodated with a chair; Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was evidently also much moved, for she had seen that the bearer of the note to Mr. Deedes was Mary, the Rectory parlour-maid; and she had a very shrewd idea of its contents, guessing as she did that it came either from her husband or Mrs. Canter, whom she knew to be with him. Mr. Jones looked furious as he felt; Freeman chuckled audibly, though he had no idea what the news was; and the rest of the spectators were moved by an intense curiosity, which was however not destined to be gratified. Captain Raleigh and Captain Tempest were as much amazed as everyone else, but their astonishment was only increased when Mr. Deedes handed them the letter he had just read.

It was from Mrs. Canter, and was brief and to the point.

"Get a remand; I have found the diamonds.

"NORAH CANTER."

"Norah is humbugging Deedes; she had no more notion where the diamonds were a quarter-of-an-hour ago than you or I," whispered Captain Tempest to Raleigh.

"I don't think so; she dare not."

"Dare not? My dear fellow, you don't know Norah; she dare do a great deal more than becomes a man or a woman either."

"Perhaps; but I have an idea this is not a hoax; I believe Norah is right. Our friend over there," nodding at Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, "is quite capable of having the diamonds and yet seeing Vera accused of stealing them."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the presiding magistrate, who informed the Court that the case would be remanded for a week and that Mark Brown would not be admitted to bail. Freeman, however, would, if he could find sureties.

Captain Raleigh then volunteered to find bail for Freeman, and Mark Brown was removed in custody. The spectators withdrew, breaking up into groups outside, where they discussed the new turn the case had taken. And Reuben Foreman went straight to the Rectory to inform Mrs. Canter of the decision, quite unconscious that she was the authoress of the letter which had so altered the course of action pursued by Mr. Deedes.

(To be concluded.)

RICE AND SLIPPERS.

RICE and slippers, slippers and rice !
 Quaint old symbols of all that's nice
 In a world made up of sugar and spice,
 With a honeymoon always shining ;
 A world where the birds keep house by twos,
 And the ringdove calls and the stockdove coos,
 And maids are many, and men may choose,
 And never shall love go pining.

For the rice shall be shed and the shoes be thrown,
 When the bridegroom makes the bride his own,
 He and she in the world alone,
 Though many a man came wooing ;
 He and she, and no other beside,
 Though the ways are long and the world is wide,
 The proudest groom and the prettiest bride
 That ever went billing and cooing.

Slippers and rice for an omen meet,
 Fling them out in the open street,
 High over heads and low under feet,
 Precious beyond all posies ;
 Glad as the song that greets the day
 When wedded lovers are whirled away
 For an everlasting month of May,
 Or a whole round year of roses.

Say, is she fair, the wife of an hour ?
 Then fairer was never the fairest flower,
 Lily or rose, in a maiden's bower,
 Blush-white on a summer morning :
 Or say, is she dark ? Then never yet
 Was southern beauty with eyes of jet,
 Or dusk-pale syren, or dark brunette,
 So lovely beyond adorning.

Is she rich ? does she bring a dower of gold ?
 Then good is the treasure to have and to hold
 Her lover will learn to be twice as bold
 With fortune at hand to aid him :
 Is she poor, in all but her own fair worth ?
 Then that is the richest dower on earth,
 And her lover will laugh at wealth and birth
 When he owns it was *she* who made him.

It is well, all well, whatever she be,
 A queen to her lord and to none but he—
 But the sweetest sight in the world to see
 Is a bride in her bridal beauty ;
 And he, he too, is a noble sight,
 The groom as gallant as belted knight,
 Who wins a prize in the world's despite
 By his vows of love and duty.

GEORGE COTTERELL.

BLOATERS AND HAM-CURED.

NO ONE can fail to associate the quaint old town of Yarmouth with the title of this article.

Yarmouth Bloaters are known everywhere, and although "Ham-cured" as applied to herrings is a name of recent date, it respects merely a new process in curing which is rapidly displacing the old-fashioned Red Herrings for which Yarmouth was long famous.

Built upon a sand-bank at the mouth of three fine rivers, the confluence of which forms a natural harbour where fishing-boats can lie in security and unload, while the rivers themselves afford a ready means for distributing throughout the eastern counties the produce of the sea, there seems little doubt that this town had its origin as a fishing station. At how early a period it became associated with the particular industry which is its staple trade at the present time it is hard to say. The catching of herrings and dealing in fresh herrings must, of course, have preceded the curing of them; but, from the nature of the fish and the difficulty of disposing of any large quantities while good, we should imagine that there was no long interval between them.

There is evidence in Domesday Book and elsewhere that at the time of the Norman Conquest Yarmouth was a fishing port of some considerable extent, and that foreign fishermen resorted to the Coast, attracted by the rich bank of herrings which, it would appear, were as abundant then as now.

At Yarmouth, for several hundred years, from the time of William the Norman, a "free fair" was held annually every autumn for six weeks, for the selling and buying of fish. In the local histories by Manship, Palmer and others will be found many curious customs that were in use on these occasions.

Whether the invention of this process of curing herrings originated with the Dutch or with our own countrymen is an open question; both undoubtedly have been benefited by the discovery.

The herring fisheries have long proved a mine of wealth for both Dutch and English. The Dutch for many years, by dint of greater energy and better appliances, reaped the larger portion of that prolific harvest of the sea which lies between their coast and our own; but of late their interest has declined, while, on the other hand, our own has greatly increased.

It is hardly possible to over-estimate the value of our herring fisheries. They are the most extensive of all the industries connected with the sea. Herrings give employment to more boats, more men, more capital, and they supply a larger amount of good wholesome food than all other sorts of fish that find their way to the English

markets : we are hardly wrong in saying than all other sorts of fish put together.

Taking our island round, there are but few weeks in the year during which herrings are not caught somewhere. We mean, of course, fish in season—prime, full fish. In the north of Scotland the season begins about the middle of July. Off the Yorkshire coast, at Whitby and Scarborough, herrings are at their prime from August to September. The Yarmouth and Lowestoft fishing extends through October and November to the middle of December. The South Foreland season succeeds these ; and up to the end of the year herrings are taken in Plymouth Sound.

It is difficult to give any correct information as to the natural history of such fish as the herrings, which always inhabit the sea.

Of the salmon and others that pass their time in periodical changes from salt water to fresh, more accurate knowledge can be obtained. It is easy to capture a few specimens and mark them in the rivers they frequent, and to note the alteration in growth, weight and other particulars when recaptured at the period of their return.

But with herrings, from their extraordinary abundance, as well as from the reason just assigned, such means of information cannot be had. Still, close observation teaches something.

It was long supposed that herrings were migratory ; that from the north of Scotland the shoals made their way along the eastern coast to the extreme south. This notion is now altogether discarded. The long period occupied by the herring fisheries between these two extremes militates against it. There is an interval of six months between the time of the Scotch and the Plymouth fishing, and the fish that are taken all along the coast in this interval, out of season, are found to be of different stages of development off the different fishing stations.

Moreover, there are peculiarities in the full-grown fish of these different stations that can only be accounted for by assuming that they are spawned there and reared on their own feeding grounds. Ask any man in Yarmouth "well up" with herrings, either as a buyer or a seller, and he will tell you at a glance whether the lot of fish before him were caught off the Scotch or the Yorkshire or the Norfolk coast.

Even when these three sorts of herrings are cured in the same way there is a marked difference in them : the flesh of the latter is more delicate and the bones less coarse than in either of the two former. Even we ourselves, from long experience of them as articles of food of almost daily consumption, can with tolerable accuracy tell Yarmouth bloaters from all others, though we should hesitate to give an opinion if the herrings were high-dried, or what is now called "ham-cured."

Having resided in the neighbourhood for many years, it is of

course with the Yarmouth fishing and with the Yarmouth modes of curing that we are best acquainted, and consequently to these our remarks will mainly have reference.

With us there are three sorts of herrings that are cured and sold under the general name of bloaters. They are locally known as spring herrings, midsummer herrings, and 'long-shores, all of them being lightly cured as distinguished from the high-dried or ham-cured. The two former have small claim to be considered bloaters at all, for the fish are deficient in size and fatness. It is among the 'long-shores that early bloaters are found to satisfy the epicure.

During the months of March and April these so-called spring herrings are taken in immense quantities, but they are immature and tasteless—not worth eating. Some of the best are sold as fresh herrings, and some are cured. They fetch a very small price either way, often not more than fourpence or sixpence a hundred, and the great bulk of the fish caught is worthless except for manure. Tons upon tons of these spring herrings are annually carted upon the land.

It is a crying shame that the waste should be permitted to go on. Sooner or later its injurious effects upon the herring fishery must be seen. Notwithstanding boat-owners and men are against it, an Act of Parliament is urgently required to enforce a "close time," as in Scotland, and to put a stop to this wanton destruction of food. These same spring herrings, now so worthless, if left alone on their feeding ground for two months' longer growth might be caught as midsummer herrings greatly improved in value; or still better as 'longshores; or if they escaped capture they would serve at spawning time in November to replenish the stock of herrings for another year.

It is a sad pity that something is not done and that too without further delay. While fish swarm as they now do in these waters, whether they are immature or not, men and nets are always ready to take them. It is not improbable that this wanton slaughter of the innocents may one day from some unforeseen cause avenge itself.

By midsummer our herrings are much improved in size and quality. But the "take" is generally disappointing, owing to the easy capture and immense destruction of spring herrings. The midsummer herrings, though fat and well flavoured, have as yet no roes. They make good bloaters, but the weather being usually warm at this time, to have them in perfection they should be cooked and eaten a few hours after they are cured.

The "'longshores," so called from being caught within a short distance of the shore, and being from this cause taken quite fresh to the curing-houses, are much appreciated. The fish here have increased in size from two or three weeks' longer feeding and have begun to develop their roes; from this time onwards to the middle of November, bloaters are to be bought; and most delicious they are.

The earliest in the year are salted only for a few hours—ten or twelve at a time—and being hung up in smoke in the evening, they are ready for sale the next morning ; but from being so lightly cured they will not keep above a day.

As the season advances and the fish increase in size they take longer in the curing and are allowed to keep three days ; but they are never so good as when first taken down from the racks in the smoking-houses. They are packed in boxes holding a dozen or more to be sent away. They should be unpacked as soon as they arrive and hung up not touching each other.

During the bloater season, it is only the best fish that are so cured. Large quantities which are not deemed the right sort for this process are packed as fresh as possible in barrels—layers of herrings neatly arranged with layers of salt between them—about six hundred to eight hundred in a barrel, to the weight of two cwt., and half barrels in the same proportion ; these are shipped to the Mediterranean and other parts. These barrelled herrings have always been in great demand in Roman Catholic countries, and so important has been this trade to the Yarmouth and Lowestoft fishermen that a favourite toast of theirs has long been :—

" Here's a health to his holiness the Pope, with his triple crown,
With nine dollars each for each cask in the town."

Herrings, also, that have been salted at sea for some days and are not suited for bloaters are left in the smoking-houses for several days until they assume a light golden colour, and thus treated they are sold as high dried and allowed to keep a week or a fortnight or even more ; but they are unsatisfactory, the fish being so often tainted by being kept too long at sea before being cured, and they are seldom appreciated by those who know what good herrings ought to be.

Of the class of "high dried," there is nothing equal to the "ham-cured."

This mode of curing, though of recent date, is rapidly displacing all others for winter or keeping herrings. It is adopted by all the best curing-houses, and though there are some that greatly surpass others in carrying out the process, it is everywhere a great improvement upon the old high dried and red herrings with which we were once so familiar.

Pork-hams, as we all know, vary in quality and flavour according to the recipes made use of in curing them, and so it is with "ham-cured" herrings. The process is not uniform. Though there is one general recipe—the fish being cured with sugar as well as salt—the process varies somewhat in the different curing-houses. In some cases the herrings are cured with the addition of a certain quantity of coarse brown sugar mixed with the salt in which they lie in heaps previous to smoking ; in others each herring is rubbed with a mixture of salt, sugar, and a little pepper before smoking

begins. According to circumstances the salting occupies from eight to ten days, and the smoking a fortnight, three weeks, and even more. First-rate ham-cured herrings are not often to be bought before the first week in December. If properly cured they will keep good till the Midsummer herrings come in the following year.

It may serve to convey some idea of the extent to which this industry of the sea is carried on at Yarmouth to mention that from four hundred to five hundred boats are engaged in it, and that these are supplemented by about half as many more Scotch boats which join our fishing when their own season is over. These Yarmouth boats are of different sizes: from the one-masted craft with three or four men in them that engage in the 'longshore fishing, to the largest-sized luggers carrying three masts and a bowsprit, varying from thirty to fifty tons, and having a crew of twelve hands each.

These large luggers in the full season take out one hundred and eleven herring nets, eighteen yards long by thirty-two feet deep, covering upwards of a mile in extent. They have also on board from eight to ten tons of salt. The value of each lugger with its equipment is estimated at about £1,000. They look to make, at any rate, two voyages a week, and are careful, if possible, to come into port every Sunday.

The take of herrings, as may be expected, varies very greatly. The boat-loads are reckoned by the "lasts" of twenty "swills," each containing five hundred herrings—long hundreds reckoned Yarmouth fashion—of which we shall speak presently—so that thirteen thousand fish go to every last.

From the many boats engaged in this industry, and the many voyages made by each boat, the yearly average of herrings caught, if it could be accurately noted, must be enormous.

The largest "take" on record by any one boat is, we believe, that of the "New Lily"—a lugger belonging to Messrs. Nockolds, which was towed into harbour with a cargo of twenty-five lasts: numbering, according to the above reckoning, three-hundred-and-twenty-five-thousand fish. An account of this extraordinary take was given at the time by Dr. Norman, of Yarmouth, in "Land and Water."

The method of counting adopted by the Yarmouth men and above alluded to is somewhat original. It is done by "long" hundreds—not one hundred and twenty to the hundred, as is usual; but one hundred and thirty-two, and the reckoning is by four instead of by five and ten. While at sea, the herrings are stowed away in the sides and hold of the vessels—anywhere in short, if needs be, and as soon as the boats come into harbour the counting begins.

For this purpose large pannier-shaped wicker baskets, not unlike a London baker's basket, are used. These are locally called "Swills." They will hold five hundred herrings each, "long reckoning." The counters take from the heap in the vessel two herrings in each hand; then, putting their two hands together, they throw all

four fish into the swills, counting as they go on according to the fisherman's arithmetic by "warps," thus—

Four herrings make a warp.

Thirty-three warps make a hundred.

By this most liberal mode of reckoning it will be seen that one hundred and thirty-two fish go to the "long hundred." The swills, when filled, are taken into the fish market—a large covered building of several hundred feet running along the side of the quay quite handy for the boats—here they are sold by auction at so much the last by one of the many salesmen, who have their offices at the back of the building; or if the owners of the boats are curers also, the fish are at once taken off to their curing-houses in different parts of the town.

As the reader may know from personal experience—or, if not, he may very readily imagine—the Yarmouth of the present day is a very different place from the Yarmouth with which we first became acquainted something like forty years ago. There was then no magnificent esplanade, there were no long terraces of houses facing the sea, no piers, only the "old jetty," as it is called, not half as long as at present, for it has been twice lengthened within our memory.

And—most important of all things in changing the character of the place—there was no fish market by the harbour side; but all the boats landed and sold their cargoes on the open beach. And an animating sight it was.

We have many times stood upon the old jetty in the height of the season during October and November, and watched the busy scene. As soon as a fishing lugger appeared in the roads, the hardy beachmen to whom the right belonged pushed off their heavy ferry boats to bring the fish ashore, and a rough time they often had of it battling with the breakers. The herrings then, as now, were counted into swills—empty swills being taken out by the ferry boats and full ones returned. These, when landed, were arranged by scores (twenty swills making a last), and sold as soon as landed by Dutch auction.

The last ferry boat on shore, the lugger was off again. A bell rang on the beach—the licensed salesman took his place—moving from last to last—the buyers made their bids, and in a very few minutes the whole lugger's cargo changed hands at prices varying from £8 up to £18—£20 the last, and sometimes more. As each lot was sold, the swills were packed upon the owner's cart, and driven in hot haste to the curing houses in the town.

It may be mentioned that the wood principally used in smoking herrings is oak billet. A billet is generally understood to mean a small stick or log of wood; but in Yarmouth the word, as the "long hundred," has a local meaning. Each single billet is a piece of peeled oak; a branch three feet four inches long, and having a

girth of four inches. The wood must be cut this length, though the thickness may vary so as to include three, four, five and even more billets in the same pieces. They are all cut, measured and marked before being landed on the quay, and any attempt at false measurement, we have been told, subjects the lot to forfeiture. Ash billet is much prized for smoking bloaters; but ash is now very scarce in our eastern counties.

To how many men and boys this industry of the sea gives employment it is difficult to say. Yarmouth with its fifty thousand inhabitants cannot and does not supply the whole of them, for all the neighbouring villages contribute hands during the fishing season, and a capital opening it is for young lads. It costs nothing for their living while at sea, and in most cases, over and above a small sum as wages, all hands on board have an interest in the boats to which they belong. The spring and summer fishing over, these lads are at home for harvest and off to sea again for the autumn herrings. In this way they can make three harvests, and, following this on for three or four years, they have money enough in hand to furnish a cottage, if they are contented to settle down and marry; or to emigrate, as several from this part have lately done, to Canada and elsewhere, under most favourable circumstances, if so inclined.

In addition to the men and lads, there are hundreds of women and girls who find employment also. Some in making and mending nets, others in the curing houses, preparing and spitting the herrings, and others at the fish wharves, engaged in washing and sorting the fish. It was from this latter class that several were selected, some time ago, to pay a visit to the "Fisheries" in London, where they attracted much admiration. They are often to be seen in parties on their way to the wharves—dressed gaily in costume—often bareheaded and bare-armed, generally good-looking, always apparently good-tempered, high-spirited and healthy—fine specimens of their sex, meet mothers of a hardy race of British seamen.

What Speed said about the "unsavoury" state of the town in his day and the strictures of Pope and Crabbe at a later period, if they were ever true, of Yarmouth they are not so now.

The cleanliness and the morality of the place will bear comparison with any other seaport of equal population anywhere. The Church and church-workers have done great things for Yarmouth. There is no city or town in England better cared for. There are charities to meet every want of suffering humanity. The accidents, physical and moral, incident to a seafaring population are most carefully provided for. He who follows the fishing on this fish-abounding coast need never want. Curing goes on and herrings can be had all the year round. To us who live within easy range of the great centre of the herring trade, they form a very important item in our daily food supply. By rich and poor alike they are appreciated. During autumn, in the height of the season, the very air is scented with these savoury

“ham-cured” fish as one drives through the different villages near the coast, and a most appetising smell it is.

Enter a cottage in any village on the eastern coast about noon-time or supper-time, and you are pretty sure to see two or three good looking herrings smoking hot on a dish on the table, and one or two more on the gridiron “getting ready”—a capital meal! and a boon indeed to the labourer and his family.

The villages round Yarmouth are almost daily visited by men with carts and hand-barrows offering cured fish for sale. They are generally sharp traders and fond of bargaining, making a great difference in selling to rich and poor. Not infrequently, in cottages one or two herrings are cooked in a Dutch-oven before the fire, with a thick slice of bread underneath, so that none of the juices of the fish are lost. In this way they are eaten untouched by anything but the fingers. This, though not a very refined, is nevertheless a very favourite way with the cottagers of enjoying these fish. At any rate, they all seem thoroughly to understand how best to cook them.

Bloaters are split open, cleaned, the head and bones carefully removed, then placed on a gridiron over a clear fire, turned occasionally: but kept mostly with the skin side on the fire till done.

Ham cured are not split open but cooked whole. They must be frequently turned, and are done quite enough when they are well heated through; if dried up by the fire they are spoiled. At any rate, this is the way we Norfolk folk prefer to have them cooked.

The fishing season ends the first or second week in December. The Scotch boats make up a week or two earlier. It is a pretty sight—we have often witnessed it—to see the whole Scotch fleet sail out of Gorleston harbour, many anxious eyes watching them till the last boat is lost to view in “the arrowy distance,” on their way north.

Next comes the parting on the Norfolk platforms, where many bright eyes are tearful, as the Norfolk lads bid farewell to their sweethearts on their return to their village homes until next season’s fishing begins. Beneficial in many respects is this interchange of employment between land and sea. The farmers often grumble at it, but they are no losers, for the men are out of their pay when they are least wanted for farm work. The service has its risks, but it has its excitement, which serves to develop energies that too often slumber when life, as with the rustics, runs on solely in one groove.

We are always glad to see the men and lads at home again, and it is always a matter of thankfulness when the season ends without any of those sad casualties which must now and then occur, leaving wives widows, and children fatherless!

HENRY P. DUNSTER, M.A.

AUNT AND NIECE.

THE air was filled with the scent of roses which floated in at the open French window of a pretty drawing-room where two persons were sitting. One was a fine soldierly-looking man, verging on fifty, the other a woman, ten or twelve years younger than himself. She was very handsome, though with the kind of beauty that had probably not made her a pretty girl. He, with his hat and stick in his hand, was leaning forward in his chair, and observing her with a good deal of earnestness and a touch of embarrassment which she, intent upon a piece of church embroidery, neither shared nor noticed. General Durnsford and Miss Warburton were friends of such long standing that moments of embarrassment between them were unexpected.

"Well," she said lightly, becoming conscious of a lengthened silence, "I thought you had come to say something important—why don't you say it?"

"I will," he answered. "I have come to ask you to be my wife."

She dropped her work with a genuine start, and turned her face to him with a look of amazement. Then, recovering herself, she said with a smile :

"Are you joking?"

"Joking! I never was more serious."

"I can't believe it. It is incredible. You can't possibly mean that you want to marry me."

"If I did not mean it I should not say it," he answered coolly. Now the ice was broken, his embarrassment had vanished.

"I am very sorry; for of course it is out of the question," she said, after a moment's pause.

He looked momentarily discomfited, but replied with equanimity :

"Why out of the question?"

"Because it is."

"Do you think," he asked, with a half-smile, "that you are not good enough for me?"

"I think myself *quite* good enough for you, but I can't believe that you think me good enough."

"Do you suppose I would want to marry you if I didn't think it?"

"Yes. It is precisely what I do suppose. You would prefer to feel yourself comfortably superior to your wife."

He reddened with anger.

"It is generally considered the highest compliment a man can pay a woman to ask her to be his wife. You don't appear to be of that opinion."

"It depends on the man—and the woman," she said, and then added, in a soothing tone: "I don't mean to be ungrateful. I fully appreciate the compliment you have paid me, and understand the special value of it as coming from you; but I think if you consider the matter you will acknowledge yourself mistaken in so complimenting me. Indeed, in my opinion, you will make a mistake in marrying at all."

"What do you mean?" he interrupted. But she smiled, and went on:

"And you would make a terrible mistake in marrying me. However, as that is a blunder you cannot fall into without my assistance, you will be saved from it."

"I imagine I am competent to choose the right wife for myself," he said, loftily.

"I doubt if any man is competent to do that, and that you are not you have proved by choosing me. My dear General, I couldn't make you happy."

"Pardon me, you could."

"At any rate you couldn't make me happy; and though that is doubtless a minor matter to you, it is one of serious importance to me."

General Durnsford at this point lost his temper, and his wits.

"I never was answered in such a way by any woman," he cried.

"Dear me! How did the other women answer? and how many were there?"

He answered by springing from his chair and turning to the door.

But she quickly laid her hand upon his arm.

"Now don't be cross, and I will cease to be flippant. You know I like you. If I did not like you so much, I think I should marry you to escape the reproach of being an old maid. But it would not be fair."

"Am I not the best judge of that?"

"No, you are not. I am really entirely unsuited to you. We have not an idea in common."

"That is as it should be. A husband and wife are all the better for being totally dissimilar."

"Yes, as the treble and bass of a piece of music are dissimilar. They should be set in one key."

"And how do you know we are not?"

"By what is called a woman's intuition. No, seriously, General, if you are bent on marrying, you must choose either a clever, managing woman, who will turn you round her finger, or a meek, clinging little person, who will make it an article of faith that you are the best and wisest man in the world."

"In short, a tyrant or a slave," he suggested ironically.

"You put it exactly," she returned mischievously. "I should be

neither. I should have neither the tact nor the courage to combat your faults, nor the meekness to submit to them, nor the confidence to be blind to them. And you would discover my faults in a week, and never cease to feel that you had been deceived in me. In short, we should both be miserable."

"Your very candid exposition has entirely convinced me," he said stiffly. "Good-bye."

"Now, don't be angry," she entreated. "Don't you see that I value you too much as a friend to risk losing your friendship by converting you into a husband?"

He looked at her irresolutely.

"You run no risk," he began, and paused as the sound of voices came through the window.

"Here's the proper person for you to marry," Miss Warburton said, as a young girl came towards the window with a basket of roses in her hand. "Poor Harold Lane already considers you a dangerous rival."

The girl was about seventeen, fair-haired and blue-eyed, and very lovely, with that soft, infantile beauty which often conceals the germ of a character best described as "difficult."

When she saw the pair at the window her face lit up with naïve delight, and quickening her pace she held out her hand to General Durnsford with a sweet, shy smile.

"What have you done with Mr. Lane?" asked Miss Warburton.

The smile gave place to a pettish grimace.

"I don't know where he's gone. He's so stupid and tiresome to-day."

General Durnsford, who was leaning against the window, regarding her with interest and approval, laughed at this.

"Why, Miss Daisy," he said, "what has he been doing?"

"He wanted me to pin a rose in his coat," returned Daisy.

At this moment the subject of the discussion appeared on the scene. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with no pretensions to good looks, but with a countenance expressive of much good sense and good temper, though at this moment it wore a frown which deepened at sight of General Durnsford, and the greeting he gave him was the opposite of that which Daisy had given.

For some moments a desultory conversation was carried on, in which Daisy alone bore a perfectly easy part, and then General Durnsford said:

"Well, I must go. Miss Daisy, will you not give me one of those lovely roses to take away with me?"

Daisy smiled and blushed, and murmured a shy yes, while she turned over the contents of her basket.

"This is the prettiest," she said, holding out to him a delicate yellow rosebud.

"Won't you pin it in for me?" he asked, with a faintly tender

inflexion in his voice, and a glance at Miss Warburton, which she refused to meet. Harold scowled, and Daisy with her whole childish heart in her eyes did as she was asked.

"Oh, auntie," she said to Miss Warburton, when the two gentlemen had departed, "how nice General Durnsford is. I do think he is the most charming man I ever met."

"You have had such a large experience," returned her aunt drily. "But I can tell you, my dear child, that Harold Lane is worth three dozen of General Durnsford. He is as true-hearted a man as you ever have met, or ever will meet."

"He a man," said Daisy scornfully; "I call him a boy."

Miss Warburton made no reply, but when her niece had gone away to put the roses into water, she remained idly by the window murmuring:

"The most charming, charming man she ever met. Poor, foolish child! And yet—have I been much less foolish?"

She stifled a sigh, and went resolutely back to her embroidery.

Two days later the General re-appeared at Willow Cottage. He was looking unusually spruce and brushed up, and carried in his hand a basket of hot-house flowers.

"I have not come to see you," he said coolly to Miss Warburton. "I have come to see Miss Daisy."

"Daisy," called Miss Warburton, without a change of expression on her face.

At the summons, Daisy emerged from an inner room, looking the very embodiment of the flower whose name she bore, in a pink cotton gown, and a muslin, lace-trimmed apron. A smile dimpled over her pretty face when she saw the visitor.

"Miss Daisy," General Durnsford began, "a friend of mine who has just gone to India sent me a pet pony to take care of during his absence. I want you to help me to take care of him by riding him."

"Oh!" cried Daisy, flushing with pleasure. And then she added mournfully: "But I can't ride."

"You are young enough to learn," replied General Durnsford, smiling.

"I should love it," said Daisy.

"It is a very handsome pony, quite accustomed to carry a lady, and very quiet. If you will trust yourself to my teaching, I'm sure I shall soon make an accomplished horsewoman of you."

"But I haven't a riding habit," murmured Daisy.

Miss Warburton here observed that she could find a skirt that would do for the present.

"And I thought," General Durnsford continued, turning to Miss Warburton, "that you would accompany us in your little pony cart to see that I take proper care of your niece."

Miss Warburton acquiesced in this arrangement without comment, and General Durnsford turned once more to Daisy.

"Miss Daisy," he said, "in return for the flower you gave me yesterday, I have brought you some from my houses."

He put the basket in her hands as he spoke.

Again Daisy could only say "Oh." But her eloquent eyes made up for all verbal deficiencies. After settling that the first ride was to take place the following morning, the General went away.

"I do think he is too fascinating," said Daisy as soon as he was out of the room, bending lovingly over her flowers.

"He is a very silly old man," said Miss Warburton sharply.

"How funny Aunt Adelaide is," murmured Daisy to herself. "She seems quite annoyed at General Durnsford's being so nice to me. I wonder—but oh no. She is too old to think of being jealous," and the girl went off into chuckles of laughter at the mere idea.

Nevertheless, it was an article of belief among Miss Warburton's friends that any time during the last fifteen years she would have married General Durnsford if he had asked her. And it was a source of unfailing wonder to them why he never had asked her. They were great friends; they were admirably suited to each other in age, position and tastes, and there was no evidence that either of them wanted to marry anybody else. However, the gossips gossiped thus unheeded, and the platonic friendship between the much-discussed pair flowed on in apparently unruffled smoothness until General Durnsford, after silently considering the matter for fifteen years, made up his mind to marry Miss Warburton. Miss Warburton, as has been seen, refused him. So proud a woman could not have done otherwise.

Daisy's first riding lesson was a great success, and soon became a daily institution. The General proved to be a model riding-master, careful, gentle, strict, and deeply interested in the progress of his pupil. Miss Warburton drove obediently along bridle paths, and across fields, and wherever else the General bade her, and looked on in silence at the little comedy which was being played before her, a comedy in which one player was so intensely in earnest, and the other—was he in earnest or not?

Miss Warburton could not decide.

But there was one person to whom this new aspect of affairs was no comedy, but a drama verging on the tragic.

Harold Lane was furious. He took to calling every day at Willow Cottage, but Daisy would hardly speak to him. She had nearly given up playing lawn-tennis. She was too tired after riding, she said, and it was a stupid game. Sitting still under the trees and talking was a much pleasanter way of spending a summer afternoon. So she sat still and talked to the General, while Harold hovered about torn with anger and jealousy. He poured out his woes to Miss Warburton.

"Her head is completely turned by the old fool's nonsense," he

cried irately. "What does he mean by it? He can't mean seriously to marry a girl young enough to be his grand-daughter."

But Miss Warburton declined to express an opinion as to the General's meaning.

"But you are her guardian," persisted the young man. "You surely won't let her make such a mad marriage?"

Miss Warburton smiled a little bitterly. "My dear Harold," she said, "my refusing to let her marry General Durnsford wouldn't incline her any the more to you."

"Yes it would. If he were out of the way I would win her—I *would!*"

Miss Warburton applauded his resolution, but advised him to keep it for the present out of sight. "Try to curb your jealousy, and take to treating her with friendly indifference," she advised.

Harold groaned. "How can I treat her with friendly indifference?" he asked, "when I always have that idiotic spectacle under my nose."

The spectacle he alluded to was of General Durnsford sitting on a garden-chair, opposite Daisy, reading aloud to her "The Unseen Universe," and stopping at intervals to explain the subject to her with his eyes fixed on her pretty, happy face.

General Durnsford showed less judgment as a master of mental culture than as an instructor in the equine art. The shallows of a girl's mind were depths of unfathomable mystery to him. He wished to interest Daisy in the questions of the day, and had no idea of the scope or the limits of her power of being so interested. He lent her the books he liked himself, and supposed that his comments were quite enough to make them clear to her. In truth, his books and his comments on them were alike Greek to her. But her profound interest in them as *his* books and *his* comments was supposed by him to be interest in the subjects they dealt with, and her delighted smiles at his goodness in making explanations were tokens to him of her intelligent grasp of those explanations.

Miss Warburton looked on at this, as at the riding lessons, in grim silence. She was not deficient in a sense of humour, but in this instance it seemed to have deserted her. The situation seemed deplorable. Harold Lane was such an eminently suitable match for Daisy. Young, pleasant-looking, good, heir to a considerable fortune, and desperately in love, Miss Warburton felt that she would do well for her niece in giving her to him. Whether she would do well in giving her to General Durnsford was a question fraught with too many complications to be easily answered.

In the meantime the General's attentions became more and more lover-like. Daisy one day expatiated on her love of dancing. She and her aunt were immediately invited to the General's house, with a view to decide upon its capabilities for being danced in. It proved to be admirably adapted for a ball. A large picture gallery, built

over a smoking room, and cut off from the rest of the house by a staircase, would make a perfect ball-room.

Miss Warburton quite warmed to the work of suggesting arrangements and decorations. The General looked and listened as she talked and moved about, pushing aside a sofa here, pinning back a curtain there, indicating the position of the band, and planning pretty corners for sitting out.

"How delightful it will be!" cried Daisy.

But the General sighed faintly. "It will be owing to your aunt if it is," he answered.

Miss Warburton carelessly dropped the piece of Turkish embroidery she was draping over a settee.

"Well, General," she said, "I think it is time for Daisy and me to go home."

When Harold Lane heard from Daisy of the projected festivity, he was filled with disgust. "I shall not go to his ball," said he; "I dislike the old fellow."

"You don't mean that, I'm sure," returned Daisy. "Your absence would cast a gloom over everything."

"You may laugh if you please," he replied grandly, "but I think it is undignified and dishonourable to accept the hospitality of a man you don't like."

"Oh, certainly," said Daisy.

There was a pause. Then Harold observed: "I suppose you don't care whether I go or not?"

Daisy appeared to consider. "Oh, well," she said, "I should miss you—at a ball. You *can* dance."

Miss Warburton was on all occasions careful about Daisy's dress. But she took special pains over it for General Durnsford's ball. And the result of her care was very good. The girl looked lovely in a white dress, trimmed with white rosebuds. The General had sent bouquets to both ladies—for Daisy one of half-blown white roses, for Miss Warburton one of scarlet hot-house flowers, which went well with her trailing draperies of black Spanish lace and the scarlet flower in her hair.

The General murmured a prettily-turned compliment to Daisy as they entered the room, but he greeted Miss Warburton with the coolest courtesy.

"I am too old to dance round dances, Miss Daisy," he said to the young girl; "but I hope you will give me two lancers, and the privilege of taking you in to supper when I have done my duty by some dowager."

Daisy delightedly acquiesced. The next person to approach her was Harold Lane.

"What have you done with your dignity and honour?" inquired Daisy.

"I have sacrificed them in this instance to love," he answered

but the last word was spoken in so low a tone that if Daisy heard it she thought it admissible to ignore it.

Daisy regretted General Durnsford's inability to dance, but as she could not have him for a partner, she had no scruple in giving Harold as many valse as he asked for.

It was a very successful ball. So everybody said. Daisy and Daisy's aunt were the subject of many comments. Which of them is the General going to marry? was the universal query. Some thought the niece, others thought the aunt, while everybody agreed that, though Daisy was a lovely girl, she would not be so handsome a woman as her aunt at Miss Warburton's age. One friend hinted congratulations to Miss Warburton on the prospect of seeing her niece so well married.

Miss Warburton replied to the hint frankly.

"I suppose it is to be," she said smiling. "But I confess the disparity of age makes me a little uneasy."

"Better be an old man's darling," etc., was the inevitable quotation that answered her.

"Yes," replied Miss Warburton thoughtfully. "If ——" She broke off. "What's that?"

There was a sudden murmur in the ball-room, gaining strength as it spread. Miss Warburton sprang to her feet. Was there a cry of "Fire"? There was certainly a strong smell of smoke. Everybody rushed to the end of the ball-room where the only exit was.

"Where is Daisy?" cried Miss Warburton, but her neighbours were too much occupied with themselves to heed her. She, too, made for the doorway, through which the smoke was now pouring in clouds.

Some drapery in the passage below had been set fire to, and now the tapestry hangings on the staircase walls were blazing. A figure was seen through the smoke mounting the staircase despite the flames, and the next moment the voice of the master of the house was heard.

"Pray do not be alarmed! There are ladders coming by which you can all easily escape, and a hose will be here immediately. Miss Warburton"—he was beside her as he finished the sentence—"I can take you down now."

"Where is Daisy?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered. "Young Lane is sure to look after her. But I must get you out of this."

He was trying to wrap her in a heavy ulster that he had brought up with him.

"But where is Daisy?" she repeated, resisting.

"I don't know," he said impatiently. "I can come back for her. But I cannot leave you: I can save you now. Miss Warburton, you must come."

She tore herself from his grasp. "You have no right to think of me," she cried indignantly. "Where is Daisy?"

"Here she is," answered Harold Lane, pushing his way through the throng towards them with Daisy on his arm. Miss Warburton gave her a little push towards the General.

"Save her!" she said imperatively. And he, without a word, wrapped her in the ulster with the hood over her head and face, and putting his arm round her made for the staircase.

Miss Warburton covered her face with her hands. Harold said with passionate bitterness :

"It is madness. She will be burnt to death!"

There was a moment of agonising suspense, and then a glad shout from below announced that the hazardous descent had been safely accomplished.

Two or three moments later the promised ladders arrived. The terrified guests were placed in safety, while the efforts of a large garden hose extinguished the flames before any very serious damage was done. But by this time all those (and amongst them Miss Warburton and her niece) who could not be of use had gone home.

The following day General Durnsford sent to inquire if either of the ladies had suffered from the previous night's alarm. But two or three days passed and he did not come himself.

During those days Miss Warburton was so restless and wore such a troubled look on her face that more than once Daisy said to her :

"Auntie, dear, I'm sure your nerves are all upset by the other night."

Miss Warburton owned that they were a little shaken.

"Daisy," Miss Warburton asked one day, "did you hear what General Durnsford was saying to me when you and Harold came up to us during the fire?"

"No," replied Daisy. "What was he saying? Do tell me."

But Miss Warburton answered by another question.

"Daisy! Do you love General Durnsford?" The girl flushed crimson; her blue eyes drooped.

"Oh, auntie! I—I like him very much." Miss Warburton sighed.

"My child," she began gently, after a pause, "don't think me cruel if I say that General Durnsford does not love you enough to have any right to marry you. Harold Lane——" But Daisy interrupted her with passionate petulance.

"I won't have Harold Lane stuffed eternally down my throat. I think old men are ever so much nicer than young men."

Miss Warburton dropped the subject. The next day she said to Daisy: "I wish you to write to the Dallas girls, and the young Arkwrights, and ask them to come and play lawn-tennis this afternoon."

While Daisy obeyed, Miss Warburton wrote to General Durnsford

and asked him to come, adding that she particularly wished to speak to him. But of this invitation she said nothing to Daisy. When the young people, including the inevitable Harold, arrived, Miss Warburton despatched them all to the lawn-tennis ground. Then she sat down to await the General. He came punctually to the hour she had named, and brought with him a large basket of hot-house fruit and flowers.

"For Miss Daisy," he said; "to make my peace with her for not having taken her out riding this week."

"Daisy is in the garden," returned Miss Warburton. "You shall go out to her presently—if you wish it."

He looked at her inquiringly.

"Ah, yes. You said you wished to speak to me. I am here at your command."

"Yes," said Miss Warburton, with desperate calmness; "I wish to speak to you about Daisy."

A shade of embarrassment crossed his face. But he replied, smiling:

"Your lovely niece must always be a pleasant subject of conversation."

Miss Warburton sat down and took up her church embroidery.

"General Durnsford," she began, "we have been friends for many years, and I believe you will not misunderstand the motives which prompt what I am about to say."

He made a sign of acquiescence. She went on, her voice trembling a little in spite of her utmost efforts to keep it steady.

"Are you serious in your attentions to Daisy? Do you wish to marry her?"

"Have you any objections to urge against my marrying her?"

"Yes. I think—I fear—Have you weighed the matter seriously? Have you considered the disparity of age between you, and the dangers that such a disparity in marriage entails?"

"I have seen such marriages," he replied, "and seen them turn out happily."

"Yes, in many instances they turn out well. There are characters which are happier for a disparity of age in marriage. But neither you nor Daisy are such characters. You could not make her happy."

"According to you," he said drily, "I am not capable of making any woman happy."

"And she could not make you happy," Miss Warburton went on, taking no notice of the interruption but by her deepening colour.

"Nor of letting any woman make me happy," General Durnsford continued.

"Daisy will marry you if you ask her, and you will both regret it all your lives."

"You are not complimentary."

"She is a mere child, and her character is entirely undeveloped."

But I understand her well enough to know that it will develop qualities for which you are unprepared, and which you will not know how to deal with."

"You have the remedy in your own hands ; you can refuse your consent."

"Oh," she cried, "if I could be sure that you loved her !"

"Why do you doubt that ?" he asked, leaning forward to look at her.

"Because, because," she stammered—"you did not seem the other night to think first of her—oh, don't misunderstand me ! The child is my ward. I am responsible for her happiness. I cannot let her dispose of her life at seventeen without some guarantee that she is disposing of it wisely."

"And what guarantee do you require ?" he asked, still regarding her intently.

"The assurance that you love her. That she is to you the one woman in the world. That—forgive me—that you are not marrying her because she is a pretty child who has a girlish infatuation for you. Tell me you love her as you ought to love your wife, and I shall be satisfied."

There was a long silence. At last General Durnsford said :

"You have made it clear to me that I must not aspire to Miss Daisy's hand. But it does seem a little hard that you will neither marry me yourself nor let anyone else marry me."

She flung down her work, and rose with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

"I never expected to hear such a speech from you," she said, and turning away, moved to the door with her stateliest step. But before she could reach it he was standing before her.

"Adelaide !" he said, his voice full of pain.

She wavered, retreated, and sank into a chair.

"Oh !" she said, "I thought you would understand. I was sure you would know I was only thinking of Daisy's happiness." And she broke into uncontrollable tears.

"I do know," he exclaimed ; "I do understand. And I never admired you more than I do at this moment. Not one woman in a thousand would have done what you have done. Daisy has good cause to thank you. But, tell me, why did you answer me so cruelly when I spoke to you three months ago ?"

She turned her face away and said nothing. He knelt on one knee beside her and took one hand in his, saying :

"I will resign Daisy if Daisy's aunt will be her substitute."

"Some day—perhaps," she answered ; "when Daisy has forgotten."

In the meantime the lawn-tennis players had finished one set, and Daisy, whose ears had caught the sound of General Durnsford's dog-cart wheels, excused herself from taking part in the next. Harold,

under the delusion that he would have a nice little tête-à-tête with the lady of his affections, declared himself too exhausted to play again. But Daisy took no notice of him. As soon as she saw the second set started she went away, racket in hand, towards the house. Harold slowly followed her. He saw her pause and look in at the side window of the drawing-room with a happy smile on her face. He saw the smile suddenly quenched. The next moment she rushed past him unconscious of his presence, and disappeared into the little summer-house behind him. On the impulse of the moment he too stepped up to the window, and looked in to see what Daisy had seen : General Durnsford on one knee beside Miss Warburton's chair, lifting her hand to his lips.

"Old simpletons," muttered the young man. And then—"Poor little darling," while on his face shone triumphant resolution.

But Daisy lay sobbing on the floor of the summer-house, convinced that her heart was broken !

VIRGINIA TAYLOUR.



DREAR NOVEMBER.

THE valley lies in mist, the skies are grey,
A few dead leaves to blackened branches cling,
The sport of chilling winds which ruthless fling
These children of the summer far away,
To join their fellow-victims of decay.
Upon a bough a linnet tries to sing ;
Its mournful note recalls a far-off Spring,
Before its desolate home was swept away,
When with its little mate and nestlings warm
It carolled forth for joy. The joy is gone !
No shelter now against the coming storm,
No answering note,—the linnet is alone.
Upon the grass the soddened petals fall
From the late roses mouldering on the wall.

E. LEITH.

MODERN BABYLON.



ON THE SEINE.

IT is difficult to approach Paris without thinking of the words which head this paper. It seems in deed and in truth a Modern Babylon, given over to lightness and frivolity. A certain feeling of depression takes possession of the spirit; and upon entering the railway station one feels inclined to enter the return train to Boulogne, which will shortly start from the other platform, and escape back to more wholesome influences.

But the mood quickly evaporates. Depression cannot exist very long in this gay capital, with its sparkling air, its wide thoroughfares, its tree-lined boulevards, and its myriad inhabitants whose first object in life is pleasure, and who make of business and serious work nothing more than a means to this end. Melancholy, indeed, is so foreign to the French

temperament and atmosphere, that those who fall victims to it are unable to endure it; life ceases to charm; the Seine is resorted to, and the Morgue becomes tenanted by those who, forgetting Shakespeare, "fly to the ills they know not of."

Nothing can be more delightful than a sojourn in the fair city that once ruled the world of fashion. But it is especially so to those who, like the present writer, possess many friends amongst the bright Parisians, and to whom it is a sort of second home. Very much

has been said and written about the lightness and insincerity of the French character ; and, as usual, very much has been exaggerated, very much is absolutely false. The French are always pleasant companions, and they can be very good and firm friends. They take life from a different point of view to the English ; and a comparison between the two nations will not always be in favour of the latter. But comparisons are invidious, and, in some instances, unprofitable. I can only say, that in Paris, surrounded by many friends who meet me with open arms, no matter how long the absence may have been ; who take up the old friendship exactly where it was laid down ; time flies on silver wings, and the days pass too quickly.

This year, all the world seems to have visited this Modern Babylon. It has been a World's Fair. The French have reaped a golden harvest ; and in too many instances, a wicked harvest ; for prices have been quite as fabulous as they have been represented. A large proportion of the visitors to the great Exhibition and the wonderful Eiffel Tower have no doubt placed themselves under the care and guidance of Messrs. Cook and Son, and these seem rather to have gained than lost in comparison with other years ; for we hear of special terms and impossibly cheap excursions which must have ended in a general satisfaction to everyone concerned, railway companies and hotel keepers excepted. However, people have a wonderful way of taking care of themselves in these days : and we may be sure that even railway companies and hotel keepers will make themselves certain of a substantial quid-pro-quo in all their worldly transactions.

Amongst the world's crowd, we also paid our devotions to the gay scenes of Paris. We started from London one very bright morning. The train of course was crowded. On reaching Folkestone, the sea was as blue and calm almost as the Mediterranean. The officials all knew us well, and greeted us with almost French-like vivacity. They always do so : and it adds pleasure to the journey. It is so easy and so much better, in going through life, to scatter a little sunshine along your path. A friendly interest in those you meet ; the recognition of the one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin ; the small substantial remembrances, which make so little difference to you, so much to them ; and you have left behind you a pleasant impression ; you have done good ; you have made one or another more satisfied with life, which is hard and prosy for most of us ; more able to bear his burden ; and you have ensured a welcome when next you pass that way.

That particular morning the boat was crowded, and the passage across was without its *mauvais quart-d'heure*. No one regretted the failure of the Channel Tunnel. Long may it be conspicuous by its absence ! The dome of Nôtre Dame de Boulogne was presently outlined in the blue sky, and we passed in between the piers of the good old town, with that rush of water, that freshness of feeling which

is ever there, exhilarating as a draught of champagne. To the left is the Etablissement with its naughty gambling rooms, which have done no good to Boulogne in general; and beyond it, upon the heights, rise the picturesque houses of the quaint old district given over to the fishing population. In this instance, distance lends enchantment to the view; for once within the district, climbing its hilly streets, you have every reason to be thankful that your lines were not cast in these places.

And yet, at sundry times and on divers occasions, mark the fishwomen that issue from them, clean, fresh and bright-faced, with well-turned ankles showing below their short petticoats, and well-shaped feet that wear the sabots so neatly and cunningly. Their large white caps and thick gold earrings are their pride, for they have no faith in beauty unadorned. You will see them in groups, chattering and laughing, and making their way to the end of the pier to watch the fishing boats going on long or short voyages, as the case may be, manned by husbands, brothers, lovers. And again you may see them crowding into the fishermen's church, kneeling in prayer and invoking the protection of their favourite saints upon the speeding barque; whilst tiny vessels hang suspended from the roof, and on the walls are signs and symbols of the fisherman's life to remind you of those that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters.

But to-day we land on the opposite quay, where the train is in waiting for the Paris passengers. The buffet is thriving, for everyone has been well, and everyone is hungry. One hardly knows which is the most amusing exhibition, most curious jargon: the English passenger trying to talk French, or the French waiter airing his remarkable English. Then comes the hurried but by no means reasonable reckoning; seats are taken; and the train slowly moves along the quay to the terminus proper. Everything seems lively; flags are flying in the harbour; the water is rushing through the locks from the inner basin like a Norwegian waterfall; the old Hôtel des Bains has once more opened its doors to the world; the fishmarket has its usual loungers without, its noisy auction within; and the station swallows us up. A few minutes' halt, and away we steam towards Paris.

Here and there the road is interesting. Small towns, quaint villages, one or two ancient and distinctive churches; a stretch of sea and shore on the right; a couple of well-built lighthouses; and presently we reach Amiens.

"Amiens, celebrated for its cathedral," as the geographies tell us. And yet how few people know anything about it; or ever break their journey in order to pay their devotions to this marvellous example of architecture. I heard the other day of a traveller, an enthusiast in these matters, who ran round to look at the cathedral whilst the train was waiting. At that time it halted twenty minutes.

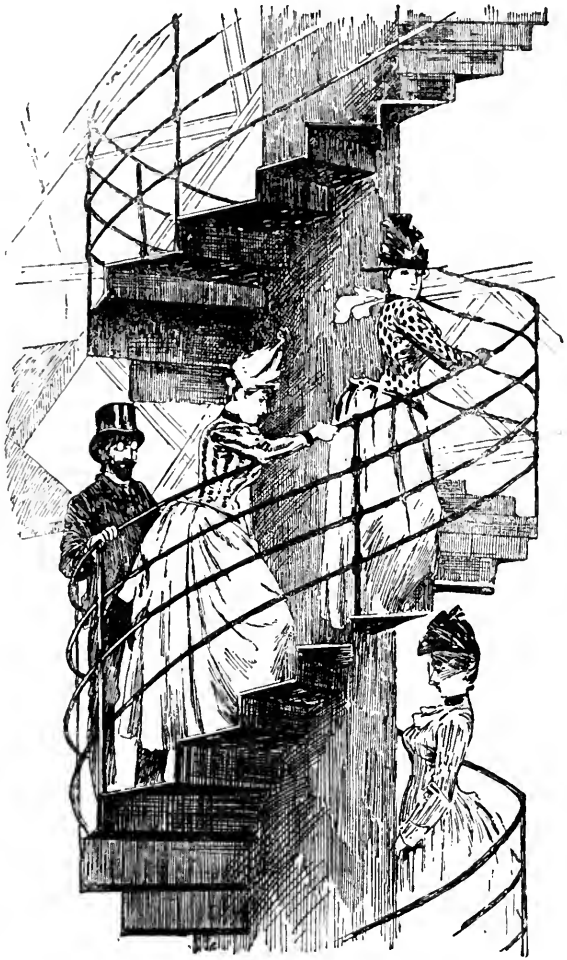
It was not three o'clock. He entered the building intending to give a hasty glance round ; became lost in the wonderful carving and all the minute details ; and when he awoke to ordinary life and looked at his watch, it was twenty minutes to seven. Train, luggage, Paris, the world in general, all had been forgotten. And after all, this is the sort of enthusiasm which sends the world upwards.

To-day, we went on. V. had never seen the cathedral and very much wanted to do so, but he was still more anxious to reach Paris, its frivolities and dissipations, and when the train went on we went with it.

In due time we steamed into the Gare du Nord, and there came in for a weary waiting. We were behind time ; the Brussels train had just arrived, and until every stick and stone of its luggage, every passenger had been cleared away, they would not attend to us.

It was amusing to watch the crowd ; it always is so : the examination of the luggage ; the various expressions of resignation, anger, anxiety on the countenances of the victims ; the persistency of the officials : though for minute searching, for incivility and deliberate annoyance, commend me to Charing Cross station above and beyond any place abroad. They call it "obeying orders and doing their duty," and if it is so, those in authority would do well to moderate their ideas in these matters. We cannot imagine the goods and chattels of an august chairman or director treated with the same freedom and want of ceremony. Perhaps it was necessary to be somewhat more vigilant during the dynamite scare, but that is all over and done with.

To-night, the Gare du Nord was crowded with its double array of passengers : most of the Brussels department distinctly foreign ;



GOING UP THE EIFFEL TOWER.

bearing that unwashed appearance which is the cachet of foreigners, and which they think gives them distinction — as indeed it does.

The other element was for the most part as unmistakably English ; and it must be admitted that a great many of these were also, to say the least, eccentric in appearance. One determined-looking woman, with a flattened bonnet and a figure like a perambulating balloon, clutched her inoffensive husband, who was a head and shoulders shorter than herself, put him into a corner and cried : “ Now you stop there, and move out at your peril ! Leave me to look after things.” He took the command with the greatest meekness possible ; shouldered his umbrella as a sentry would his gun, and looked a very patient and ridiculous object. His grenadier of a wife, who was really the sentry, went off in search of her luggage, found it and cleared it in no time. She even intimidated the French officials, who were glad to get rid of her at any price. “ Ah ! ces anglaises ! quelles femmes ! ” one murmured to another, and the remark was not intended for admiration.

But our turn came at last, and we found ourselves rattling through the streets of Paris in one of those open *voitures de place* which every moment seem about to let one in for a breakdown—though of a very different sort from that connected with the light fantastic toe.

It was the usual scene, gay and airy. The long, straight thoroughfare of the Rue Lafayette ; the tall houses with their white, stone-like fronts and their endless balconies of open iron work. The drivers in the streets, as usual, going their own way and getting into everybody else's. The boulevards with their trees and cafés and crowds, and then our hotel. On this occasion it was the Hôtel Chatham, and it is much to be commended and recommended. It is sufficiently large, yet not gigantic ; you are a person, and are not labelled with a number, like a convict ; it is very central and well situated ; its rooms are less oppressive than most of the Paris hotels ; and its prices are moderate. This latter is an especial virtue in a year when Paris has not known the meaning of the word moderation.

One of the first things to be remarked in Paris is that, like London, it is becoming really more American than English. The unpleasant twang greets you at every turn. In London, all the large hotels are crowded with them ; and one wonders which is cause and which effect : whether the Americans are the result of these modern caravanseries or vice-versa. Either way, the end is the same. And still they come to London. And still they go to Paris.

That first night at table d'hôte (we were rather late for it, but they admitted us) we sat next an American lady and her daughter. The daughter read a fast French novel in the interval of the courses ; improving her knowledge of the language possibly, but not her morals.

At the end of dinner, when the ice came round, they had two dishes placed before them, each containing a substantial remainder. These they finished, together with two platefuls of macaroons, and then looked round for more. But the waiters had discreetly vanished, and the damsel said to her mother in very ill-used but very audible tones: "I guess we shall have to wait until to-morrow. Then we'll manage better."

They rose to depart. So did we; both possibly bound for the same goal: the World's Fair. But our ambition to-night soared to elevated regions: no less than the summit of the Eiffel Tower.

We went forth. The boulevards were crowded. Gas flared in all directions; it was almost light as day, whilst the scene was much more picturesque and enlivening. Why is it that everything at night bears a greater charm? Even the common-place becomes almost romantic, the rugged softened, the ugly subdued, and the unsightly hidden. Even human nature of the least attractive description gains by the change.

The scene was almost bewildering. Carriages thronged the streets. Omnibuses—the ponderous Paris omnibuses—were laden within and without. You could scarcely move along the pavements. There was not a vacant seat inside or outside the cafés. And yet, somehow, the drivers tear along the streets, and with less rule of the road there seems far less obstruction than in the streets of London.

We were soon racing down the Rue Royale and through the Place de la Concorde, where the fountains were playing in the gaslight and the obelisk rose in classic form. Then down the quays of the Seine. And there in the distance the Eiffel Tower reared its gigantic head towards cloudland. It was just beginning to light up, and it looked like some far off appearance in the sky; a new constellation.

Men were running beside the carriages selling tickets of admission, for there was no such thing as paying at the entrance gates. We rolled over one of the bridges of the Seine, and soon found ourselves at the foot of the Tower.

It was an indescribable scene; almost impossible to be taken in. It was not earth, but fairyland. Darkness had quite fallen. The tower itself was brilliantly and effectively illuminated, both with gas and electric light. We stood beneath it, looking upwards, and became silent with wonder, lost in amazement. No description had done justice to the structure, or enabled us in the least degree to realise it. Expecting to find the tower ugly and aggressive, we found it a thing of beauty; an airy fairy structure; a marvel of ingenuity; an eighth Wonder of the world. The Colossus of Rhodes, indeed, one of the former Wonders of the world, would have looked a mere infant of days in the hands of a giant if brought into comparison with the Eiffel Tower.

The very people as they streamed to and fro in hundreds and thousands seemed dwarfed to half the size of human beings. It gave one a feeling almost of unhappiness, as if we had suddenly come upon a new world, a new order of things. In the centre of the space marked by the four feet of the tower was an immense basin containing a sculptured group. On this the electric light played ; and as the streams of people passed and repassed under its rays, they were lighted up beyond the brightness of sunshine, and sharp, deep shadows constantly crossed and recrossed the ground like phantoms chasing each other.

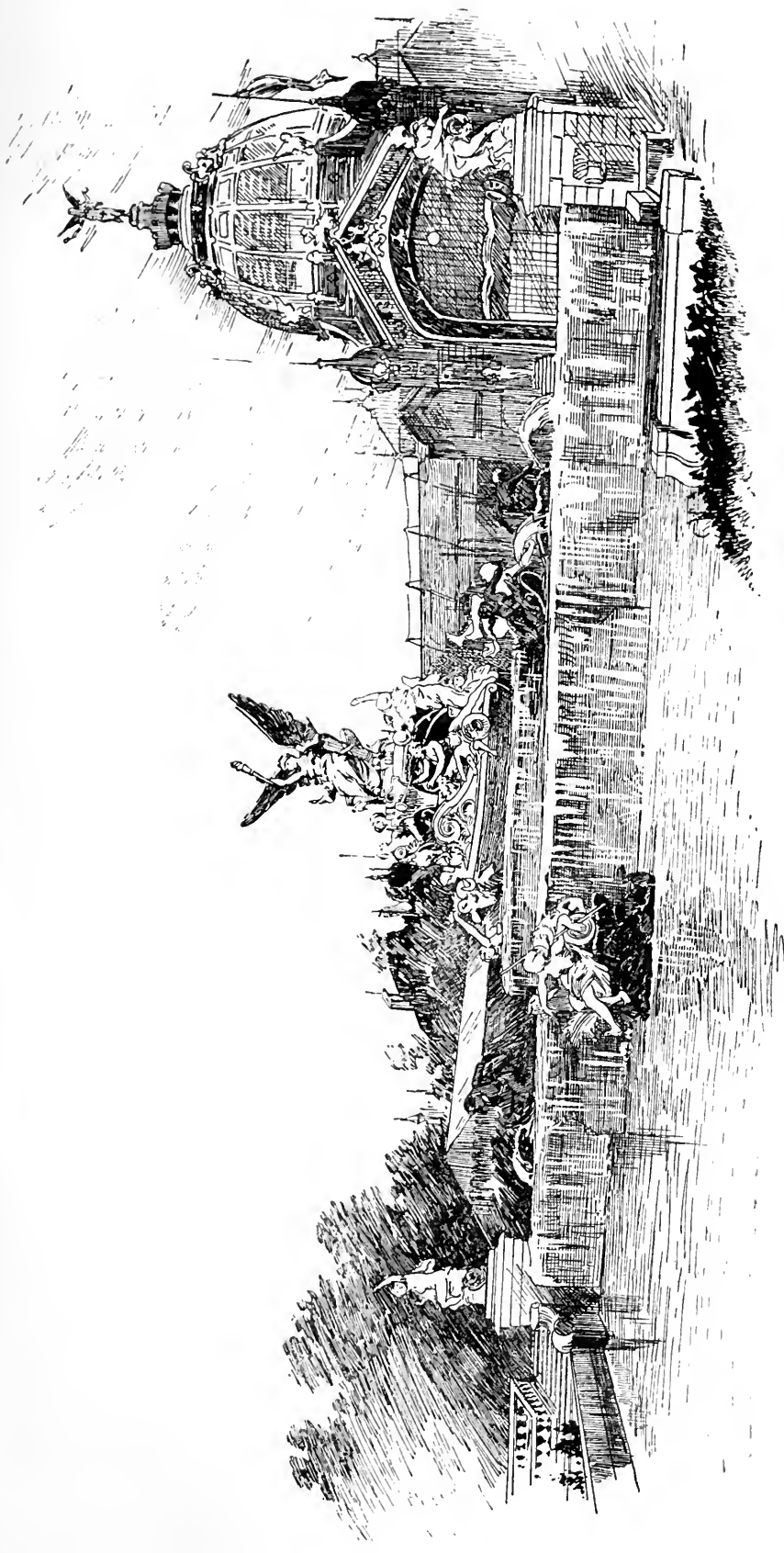
This brightness and illumination extended on all sides. The dome of the centre building was lighted up with row after row of gas jets ; the wings took up the tale, and the opaque globes ran from end to end. Above the dome the statue was lighted up with brilliant effect by two streams of electric light directed from the summit of the tower, the dark background of the sky only heightening the weird charm.

These streams of electric light shifted about and changed colour, now thrown upon the dome, now magically tinting the fountains that played and plashed around. Very near the tower was an airy structure called the Pavillon du Gaz, which was simply a blaze of light inside and out. It looked so ethereal that every moment you expected to see it dissolve and disappear, like the baseless fabric of a vision. It was a vision indeed, charming and enchanting ; and we were plunged in a waking dream. The whole thing was marvellous, and V. exclaimed at length : "None but the French could accomplish such wonders !" a sentiment we immediately echoed. The English might plot and plan for ever ; they could never do it. Everything of the kind that was ever seen pales before the extraordinary vision of the Champ de Mars. We can imagine that the great exhibition of 1851 was considered fairyland and a Wonder of the world by those who were there to witness it ; but what could it have been in comparison with the wonders of the Paris Exhibition of 1889 ?

The night was sultry ; the heat was intense. The Parisians wandered about in their airiest costumes. But a large proportion of the French were evidently from the Provinces ; and they were armed with baskets and umbrellas ; and their costumes were as fearful and wonderful as the patois they conversed in.

But we, lost in dreams and wonder, gazed on and on at the scene ; and the more we gazed the more bewildered we grew. The building seemed endless, the place gigantic. It was a world of its own. It ought to have taken years to construct instead of days and months. Was it all destined to demolition when the last day was ended and the last door was closed ? This seemed impossible.

However, we awoke to something like realities, and made for the entrance to the tower. During all this time the lifts had been going



AT THE WORLD'S FAIR.

up and down, up and down ; always crowded ; moving smoothly and noiselessly as a roller might pass over a lawn ; no rattling of trains, no jarring, no whirring and wheezing. The miniature railway close by, conveying its passengers to different parts of the Exhibition, worked much more noisily. The whistle shrieked and the engine puffed like an asthmatic machine going up hill, and the carriages rumbled and rolled and rattled. But the machinery of the Eiffel Tower was built by a sorcerer, and acted like witchcraft.

True, one of the lifts came to a sudden stoppage the other day, and for an hour people found themselves, like Mahomet's coffin, suspended in mid-air between earth and heaven ; and some women shrieked and others fainted, and strong men turned pale ; and it was not even a case of "*Sauve qui peut !*" for there was nothing but air to tread upon if they escaped ; and it is only disembodied spirits who possess the privilege of walking on air. But the little contretemps after all only proved that even the greatest of men are human, and that now and then when wheels want oiling they must be attended to. And variety is charming : though probably the occupants of that suspended lift would rather have dispensed with the variation. But it all came right at last ; and when once more they touched earth, no doubt, five minutes afterwards, with the elasticity of the French temperament, they had resorted in a body to the Pavillon du Gaz and with loud laughter and much *trinking* of glasses were drinking each other's health and the success of *La Tour Eiffel*.

But to go back to our own first night. We took our tickets and entered the lift, and had not two minutes to wait before we found we were parting company with earth. The effect was curious and uncanny. We rose higher and higher, and felt as people must feel who are going up in a balloon. We reached the first stage, where one has to change lifts. It is an immense platform full of noise and business and bustle. It contains large restaurants, upon one of which the names of Spiers and Pond appear in such letters that he may read who runs. No charges in Paris this season have been more exorbitant than those of this restaurant, therefore the English can scarcely find fault with the French in this matter. There was a post office on the platform, and anyone might write a letter in these cloudy regions, post it here, and it would go forth to any part of the Globe bearing the mark of *La Tour Eiffel*. There were emporiums of industry where crystal goblets were being ground and engraved and carried away by the dozen as remembrances of a visit to high latitudes.

We left the lift, which held about fifty people, and a marvellous sight met our gaze as we looked over the balustrades. It was looking down upon the world with a vengeance. The lower regions seemed blazing with light. Everything immediately around the tower stood out as clearly as by day, and far more effectively. It was one vast illumination, as if the world had gone into fête and festivity for

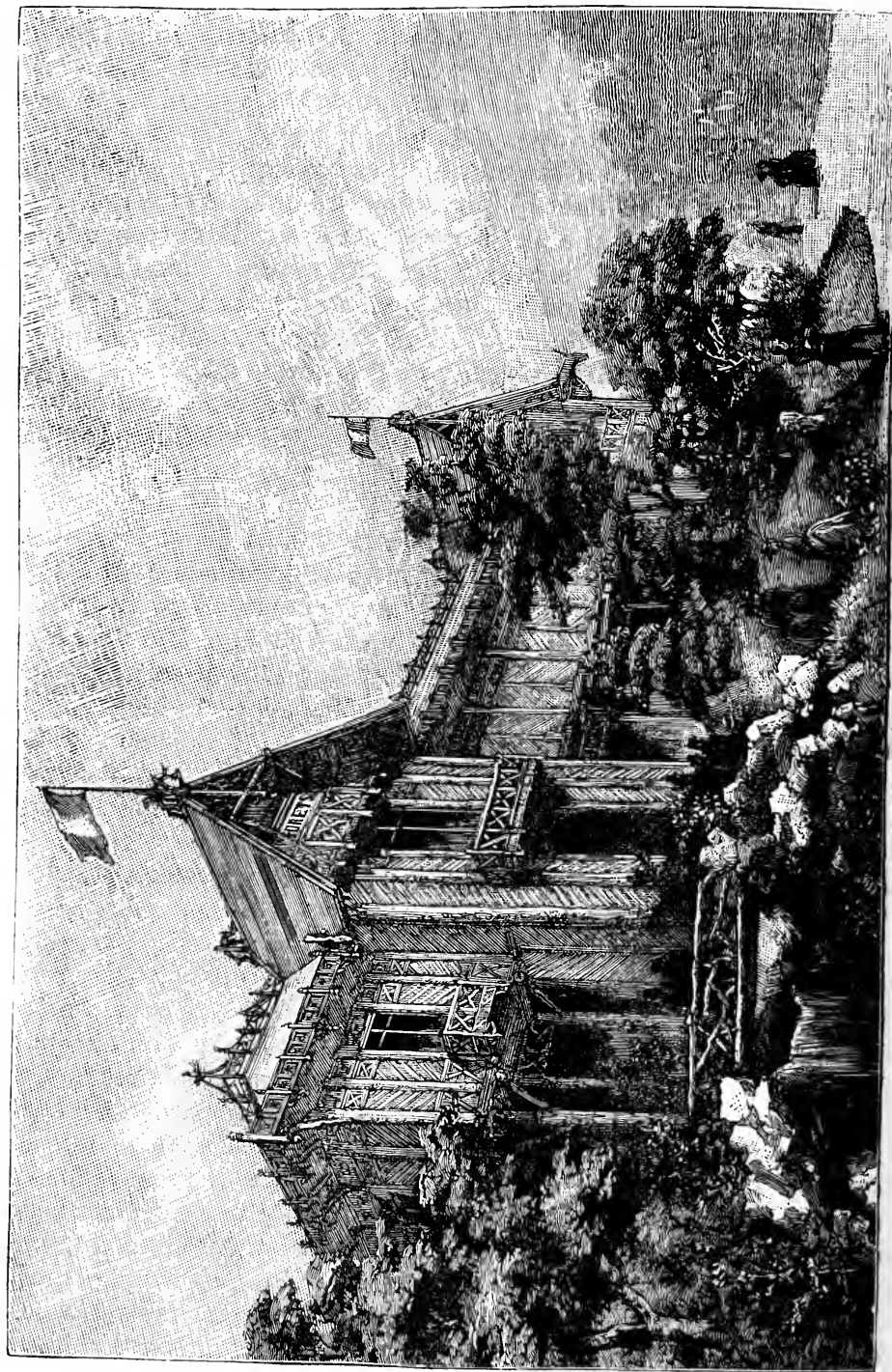
some national or even cosmopolitan event. The streams of people walking to and fro had the effect of ghosts: footsteps and voices were lost. Not even a buzz or a murmur reached our listening ears. Their shadows as they passed in and out of the electric light looked cold and black. The fountains played, and the coloured lights were thrown upon them, but we heard no splash. We seemed to be looking on at a pantomime or a world of phantoms.

And stretching around far and wide was the great city, which we could only trace by its lights. The scene was brilliant and exciting.

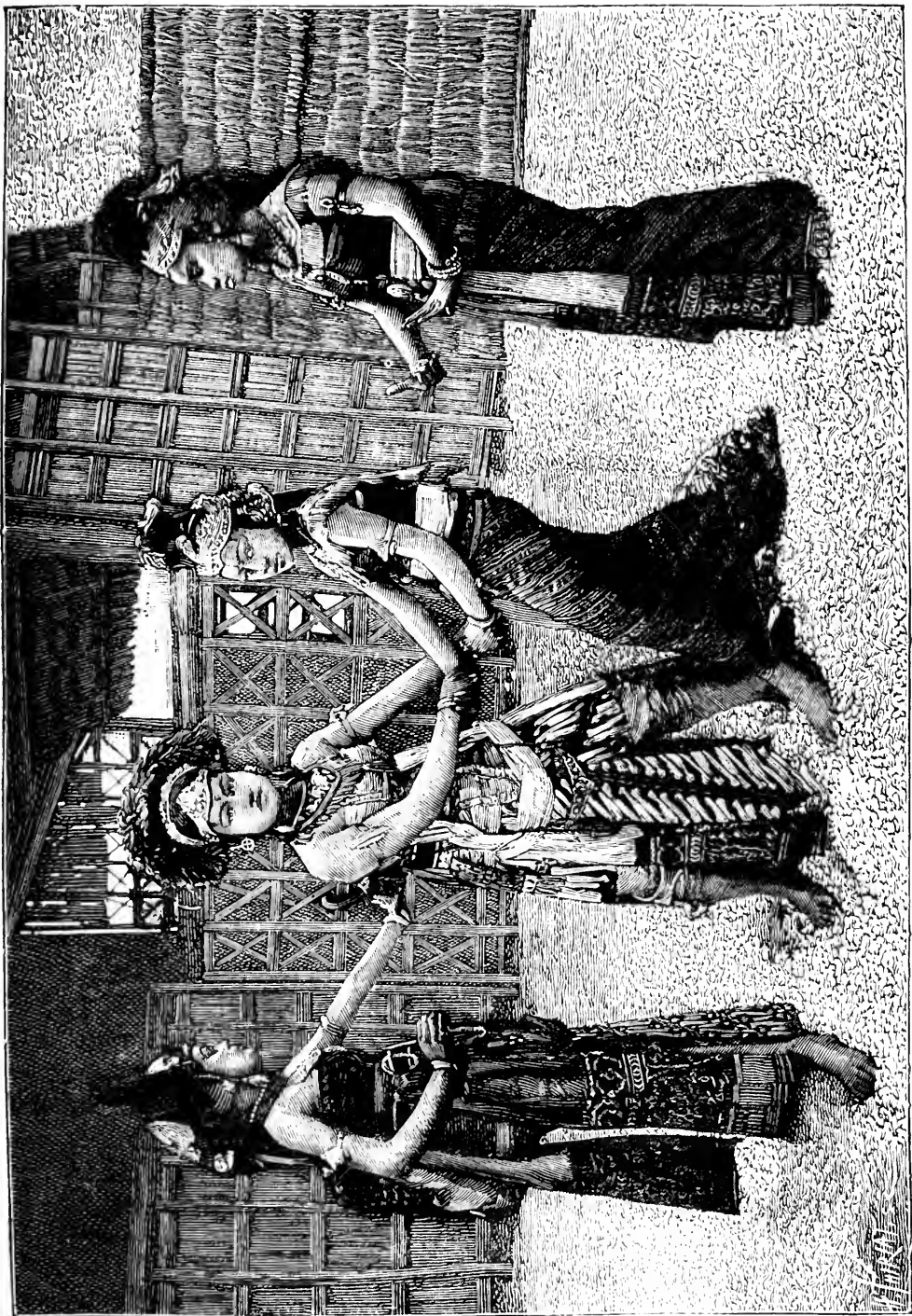
But we were only at the first stage. We entered the second lift, which took us up to the second stage, and here we found ourselves above the highest building in the world. Two more lifts took us safely to the top of the tower. Even here the platform was capable of holding a great crowd of people, and there were all sorts of booths selling the Eiffel Tower in every conceivable reproduction. It was more wonderful than ever to look down upon the world, and we felt we had done well to take our first impressions by the magic of night-light.

There are also staircases as far as the second stage, and you have the option of walking up if you prefer it. The first time we went up by daylight, we had the felicity of seeing a very stout lady who had had the courage to attempt the staircase, reach the end, and with a cry of "Ouf!" at the last step, fall gracefully but without ceremony into the arms of an astonished gentleman who happened to be passing at the moment.

By daylight the scene is more extensive, but less impressive. The whole city is mapped out in a comprehensive view. The Seine runs its course like a silvery stream, winding about, and passing into the regions of Sèvres, and even far beyond. The countries beyond France that were to be seen are of course a delusion. The monuments of Paris itself rise up in every direction. Nôtre Dame with all its beauties is conspicuous. The boulevards may be traced in a long continuous line, and even here their trees look fresh and green. The crowds of people and carriages look like puppets in a show. There is a slight constant movement or agitation. We are looking down upon a world in which we seem to have no part. We begin to feel as if we could realise the sensations of those who may be gazing at us from some far-off star or planet: a race of beings endowed with limitless powers of vision. The world's fair at our feet is absolutely bewildering. The banks of the Seine are lined with buildings that seem to have sprung up in a night, like mushrooms. Everything is pregnant with life and movement, excitement and animation. The river itself is as animated as the land. Steamboats are constantly running up and down, crowded with passengers. The floating baths were never so much patronised. And, alas! that sad building under the very shadows of Nôtre Dame, the Morgue, was never so full.



THE FERNERY AT THE EXHIBITION.



JAVANESE DANCERS.

You trace the Champs Elysées, which two hundred and fifty years ago was first planned out for Marie de Medicis. Then, in the days of the de Pompadour, the trees were cut down in obedience to her capricious whim, to be restored only after her death. You also trace the Avenue Montaigne, once the Allée des Veuves, where the rich widows would meet for their drives, and console themselves and each other in their bereavement until time permitted them once more to return to the dissipations of the gay world.

The Arc de Triomphe stands out conspicuously, and the magnificent and comparatively new Avenue beyond it stretches down to the Bois de Boulogne. Here we see the whole extent of the famous wood, skirted by Longchamp, where the French Derby is run. If the trees could only whisper secrets like the birds of the air, what tales they could tell ! What romances, what intrigues, what tender assignations, what broken vows ; what duels fought for an idea ; or, perhaps, for the sake of winning a woman's fair smiles, that so often are also fickle and false. Yet they have ever been the levers of the world, and ever will be.

And in the far-off distance, beyond the column which marks the place of the old Bastille, we can just trace the outlines of Père la Chaise : the goal to which all this hurrying, breathless crowd are hastening—the grave. How many great names are reposing there : from George Sand and Rossini down to the pathetic tomb of Abelard and Héloïse. It is crowded, indeed, with names that will never die ; and its sad cypresses pointing upwards whisper to each other that all men, even the greatest, are Time's subjects, and must yield in turn to the inevitable law.

As for the Exhibition itself, it is no doubt the most extensive, most marvellous, most interesting and complete that has yet been seen. At a first visit it is bewildering in the extreme. It must take weeks to see it perfectly ; and unless you go systematically to work, you may wander over and over again through the same courts and departments, and like the Irishman who objected to beer when he had been used to whisky, "seem to get no forwarder."

Every country appears to be represented ; and perhaps one feels that one would have been grateful for a little less. It cannot be denied that a great deal is uninteresting, or appeals only to the initiated few. You wander into a department only to wander out again rather vexed and disappointed. There is a great deal that is small and trivial ; a great deal that you would think more in place at an ordinary country fair ; and it is not everyone who has the inexhaustible vivacity of the French, which would carry them through a week's dissipation without rest or sleep ; or the wonderful physical powers of the honest visitor from the provinces, which produce the same result. The very planning out and disposition of the whole thing is a frightful tax upon one's mental and physical energies. You almost envy the old people who are being perambulated about in

Bath chairs. You have to wander over an immense deal of ground. Every country is a small exhibition in itself. There are an endless number of detached buildings, most of them designed according to their own laws of architecture. The general effect is varied and good, but the general result is one of horrible exhaustion and fatigue.

But on the whole you are repaid. It is, as already remarked, undoubtedly the finest and most complete exhibition ever seen. In an age of such rapid progress, of course this is only as it should be. The art treasures, especially, are inexhaustible. You walk through the galleries, and one object after another arrests the attention and claims your astonishment and admiration. The pictures are endless; the collections of old china fill you with rapture and despair: despair that your purse is not that of Fortunatus. You are surfeited with old tapestry, old enamels, old ironwork and old furniture. For a great deal that has been brought together belongs to the past, and proves that this is not in all cases an age of progress.

Some of the most curious exhibitions in the whole World's Fair—and some of the least pleasant—are the Javanese dancers: women in the costume of the country, who go through the most singular postures, extraordinary contortions, wave-like, undulating motions it is possible to conceive. Every moment they surprise you with some new movement, and every now and then you think they are about to fall to pieces. The Javanese music, which consists in rattling bobbins of wood together strung upon wires, is quite as remarkable.

When you are tired and want rest and change and fresh air, you may take your seat under the shadow of one of the four kiosks, and listen to one of the four military bands that play there day after day. If in need of luncheon, you have restaurants at hand. Here, also, you will be filled with astonishment, though probably not admiration.

Our own first luncheon was a very modest one. We had breakfasted late, and should dine early, for the sake of being in time for *L'Etrangère* at the *Comédie Française*. Luncheon therefore consisted of a slice of melon and mutton cutlets: nothing more. "Messieurs will commence with a portion of melon?" said the insinuating waiter in very Alsatian French: and the melon was brought. The two slices probably cost the restaurant four sous, but they charged us the modest sum of four francs. The total of the bill was sixteen francs, which included a bottle of *vin ordinaire* at two francs. The cheapest wine at these places is generally the best.

Most of the charges in Paris have been on a similar scale, so that the French will have no reason to complain of a failure of the golden harvest they anticipated. For the charges have not deterred people from visiting the World's Fair. Millions have flocked to it. Paris

has been crammed to suffocation. The air has been exhausted, and one wonders that supplies have not failed also. The inhabitants of Paris—those who leave it every year for the country—have left it earlier than usual, horrified at the noise and confusion, the *bouleversement* and disorganisation of the whole city.

Within the boundaries of the Exhibition the people who to ourselves created the most amusement and surprise were the French from the provinces. They brought all their airs and graces with them : also their umbrellas and their luncheon baskets. They were there in large numbers, day after day ; and it was the numbers that created surprise. The proverbial stocking-foot which all the paysans of France possess must have been largely drawn upon. “Nos économies nous permettent de voyager,” one of them proudly remarked to me in the course of an interesting conversation. They went through the Exhibition with eyes and mouths open, amazed at everything they saw. With many of them it was a first visit to the Capital : and the answer to the question : “What made you come ?” was invariably the same : “Pour voir la Tour Eiffel.” For it is not only easy to enter into conversation with a Frenchman, but difficult to avoid it. The lively Celtic temperament cannot long endure silence. With them, silence is silvern ; it is speech that is golden.

At mid-day, every open air bench was appropriated by these provincials. Their precious umbrellas reclined, and they spread their déjeuner and drank their beer or wine al-fresco, in no way disconcerted by the observing crowd. They were always clean and neat, but too often rough and clumsy specimens of humanity. They could not appreciate much of what they saw. The wonderful collection of art treasures, the progress of science, the beauties of manufacture and rare textures—all this was very much beyond them. But they could look upon it with awe and reverence ; with something of the feeling that a pilgrim gazes upon a long-sought shrine ; the beauties would insensibly affect them, though they would not be able to analyse their feelings, or separate cause from effect ; and so the tax upon the stocking-foot might very easily be returned with interest. The tout-ensemble, the coup d'œil, was not above and beyond them ; the plashing fountains, the assemblage of wonderful buildings ; the illuminations—all this to them must have been fairyland : with the Eiffel Tower for their wonderful piece-de-résistance.

Fairyland : and not to these good paysans only. It must have borne this appearance more or less to everyone who has visited the Exhibition. It will never be known how much the Eiffel Tower has contributed to its great success, drawing thousands and hundreds of thousands to gaze upon it with the inevitable attraction of a magnet. In its way it is a thing of beauty. A light, airy structure, through which you can see the bright blue sky beyond. A marvellous example of ingenuity, proving its originator a genius in his depart-

ment. Perfectly proportioned, possessing a great deal of grace, looking amazingly frail and fragile for so great a structure ; almost inspiring one with the feeling with which one gazes at a child's house of cards ; it has nothing to offend, much to create admiration.

The days of the Exhibition are now numbered ; but it has been so great a success ; has so nearly reached perfection ; at the same time has been so great a whirl, so heavy a tax upon one's vital energies, that one is almost induced to wish it might be the last of its kind. "We have now had enough of exhibitions !" a very great authority upon such subjects exclaimed to me. And one is tempted to echo the sentiment.

CHARLES W. WOOD.



SUNRISE.

I saw her then, and I can see her now,
The dawn upon her brow—
The crimson dawn, flooding the broad, grey stream,
And banks where rushes grew, like some fair dream,
Where Hope and Youth, and early Love had met,
Can I forget ?

Her hair blown back ; had her eyes caught the glow
From Eastern skies ? Yet no ;
With a more steadfast radiance still they shined,
As lighted from some hidden lamp behind,
Upon her lips a smile that came and went,
And spoke content.

Oh, happy vision ! Oh, the river wide,
With its swift fleeting tide !
The low-lying flats by early breezes swept.
The sun aflame, to sudden glory leapt !
Love, Light and Joy seemed born that very hour,
A triple power.

SUNSET.

The day was dying—o'er the river grey
A misty vapour lay.
The winter sun sank slowly in the West
Casting a fitful gleam upon its breast.
The reeds and rushes stood in ghostly ranks
Upon its banks.

Silence enfolded all—more sad than speech ;
Deserted lay the reach.
Yet ever and anon I seemed to see
A girlish form that beckoned unto me ;
A form with hair blown back and eyes aglow,
Through mist and snow.

D I V I D E D .

BY KATHERINE CARR

CHAPTER X.

THE "BON ESPOIR."

"Les petits oiseaux qui sont dans les bois sont joyeux pour leur âge !

"Quand je les entends chanter, j'ai regret du temps que je perds à pleurer.

"Pourquoi pleurer le temps passé ? Hélas ! il ne revient point. Les petits oiseaux ne pleurent pas."

Thus chanted Yvonne Hévin, in a low, happy voice as she lifted her glowing eyes to the quiet grey sky.

"You are very gay, Yvonne," remarked Raoul. "This is the fourth chanson you have sung since we came out."

"Yes. It is because I am happy. To-day, it seems as if winter had gone and that spring was coming."

"It is only a lull before fresh storms. This depression in the weather has been gradually creeping to us from the north. It oppresses me. Look at that grey bank of cloud on the horizon. There will be a thunderstorm before night."

They were together in the *Bon Espoir*, Raoul working the sails, and Yvonne in her favourite position at the helm.

It was one of those still, mild days that occasionally surprise us about the end of January, as though wind and rain-clouds had worn themselves out, and were resting, for a space, to gather up fresh stores before they poured out upon the world their wild March passions.

There was barely enough wind to fill the sails, but having no definite object in view, Raoul de Kériadec and Yvonne were undisturbed by the slow progress of the little vessel, and contented themselves with cruising lazily down the bay towards Penmarch. The shores past which they drifted grew more and more savage and desolate, with great jagged cliffs and bare promontories, and sharp brown rocks jutting out of the sea like a guard of spears all along the coast.

Everything was grey, dead, monotonous ; the quiet expanse of sea only darkened now and then by the thin black line of unbroken ripple that brought a welcome puff of air to swell the sails of the boat that was gliding smoothly and slowly over the water.

Raoul and Yvonne spoke but little. Theirs was an intimacy that allowed of silence ; they had been companions too long to feel called upon to make conversation to each other, unless the spirit moved them. Except for occasional instructions to Yvonne in her capacity

as coxswain, Raoul scarcely spoke ; but sat smoking his pipe meditatively, with the grave thoughtfulness that had come over him during the last six months.

He was much changed. He was no longer a raw, unfledged boy, unable to govern his temper, quick to speak his thoughts as they came without pausing to consider the consequences, and intolerant of opposition. He had had a mental experience that helped to bring out all his latent vigour of manly self-reliance, and that gave him a knowledge of the world which otherwise, in his monotonous country life, he might never have acquired. He had loved ; believing, after the fashion of his proud forefathers, that the love of a de Kériadec would be an honour to the woman on whom it was conferred. Instead of that, it had been despised and trampled upon as worthless, thrust back into his own keeping, without kindness or gratitude, as though the devotion of a de Kériadec might be had by anyone for the asking.

He became morose, embittered, fiercely indignant. Then, because, in spite of his wrongs, he could not leave off loving his wilful young wife, he began to think that there must be some good reason for it all—some fault in himself that might be mended.

He was by no means a fool ; though, up to the present, he had never seen the necessity for exerting or educating his brain ; and, though slow to assimilate new ideas, he had a certain clear instinctiveness that helped him to form very cogent and practical conclusions when once he set himself to master a question.

The study of one's own character, engrossing as it is to most people, is the most difficult one in which to arrive at an unbiassed judgment ; and it says a good deal for Raoul's strength of mind and honesty, that one of his first conclusions was to the effect that he was lamentably narrow-minded and prejudiced. It was the very natural result of his home education and bringing up ; but it had worked untold mischief in his relations with Denise. She did not understand his prejudices. She may have treated him unfairly ; but he, on his part, had drawn much of his misery on himself by his intolerance, his boyish jealousy and want of forbearance.

After their final parting he set himself the task of deliberately sifting the causes of all their troubles, weighing the pros and cons with a rigid justice that laid as much of the blame as he was able on his own conduct. If, in the end, he found it impossible to acquit Denise, he kept it to himself ; and never by a word hinted to anyone else that he had learnt through much tribulation to repent his hasty and imprudent marriage. But those two years of alternate passion and coldness, anger and remorse, hope and disappointment, had left him much older, graver—harder in many ways. What else could be expected ? His life was practically spoilt. There was nothing to look forward to ; no object for which to work. He was the last of the de Kériadecs. With him the good old name would die ; and

then the beloved home would pass into the hands of a distant and unknown branch of the family.

Before his marriage, life at Camper had seemed good enough. The days had been all too short for his redundant spirits and energy. His estate, and the fishing population of the Coast, had amply provided him with interests. Why, then, should he not resume the thread of those bygone contented days?

He could not do so. Every nook and corner of his home was haunted by Denise—a shadowy vision of lovely womanhood, that cast a faint and melancholy air of dead regret over all the places that had known her bright presence. An echo of her voice, soft and sweet, and of her low, rich laugh, seemed to linger yet about the deserted rooms and corridors where her light footstep no longer fell. Sometimes during the winter evenings, when Raoul sat alone in the silent hall, a sudden creak of the oak rafters, or the wind shaking the handle of the door, would make him raise his eyes with a start, half expecting to see her standing there, in all her Parisian daintiness—with the gold-brown curls on her white forehead, the red lips a little pouting, the exasperatingly-tender blue eyes, that could flash out upon the man who loved her with such bewitching petulance. How he longed at such times to hear the “click-clack” of the little high-heeled shoes on the parquet floor, the “frou-frou” of the bridal fineries he had pretended in his manly ignorance half to despise as childish frivolities!

Often, the loneliness and aimlessness of his existence goaded him into longings for a career of reckless folly, such as most men of his age and in his circumstances would have excused in themselves. He was young; and the best of men is only human, with instinctive desires for amusement and companionship; and if Raoul was sorely tempted to throw off his self-control and seek relaxation in some less dull and quiet place than Camper, who could blame him? But it was his inward conviction that if once he allowed himself to lose this strenuous control over himself he would be unable to recover it; unable to live up to those brave old words carved on the tomb of the hero, Gesril de Kériadec:

“Né Breton, tu n'oublieras
Afin d'agir loyalement.”

The people round about Camper declared that Monsieur de Kériadec was more reckless and daring than ever that winter. It was as if death was unwilling to take up the challenge which in reckless defiance of danger he seemed to have flung to its grim powers.

Not that he had any wish to die, or any morbid thoughts about it; but death, as death, had no terrors for him, so long as it came quickly and not in any slowly-lingering form; and it would have one merit if no other: it would free his wife from the last of her fetters.

Once only, that winter, did he leave Camper. It was late in January, and he was only away for the inside of a week. He told no one where he had been; but on his return there was some, scarcely-definable, change in him—a kind of hard callousness, with sudden bursts of forced spirits, as if his patience had come to an end at last.

He had been to Paris; had seen his wife without her knowledge, and learnt, from a friend whom he could trust, that Madame de Kériadec was one of the gayest and most charming of beauties in the gayest and most charming of Parisian circles. She, at all events, had profited by her share of the bargain! And her husband returned to Camper resolutely determined to forget her, as she deserved to be forgotten.

Yvonne Hévin had conquered! Now that Madame de Kériadec with her arts and wiles had disappeared from the scene, there was a chance that the cloud would be lifted from Raoul's brow and that he would regain his old frank enjoyment of life.

Ever since Denise's departure Yvonne had omitted the supplement that latterly, in all good faith, she had added to her evening prayer for Raoul's safety, "Dieu te sauve." She had never tried to analyse what she meant by these words, until the night after Denise left Camper; then her instinctive return to the old, simple blessing, "Dieu te garde," told her that it was from Denise she had wished him to be saved—released from the wife who was making his life a burden to him.

That she was able to think such thoughts, and yet not hate and despise the baseness of them, shows the distorted and ignorant narrowness of the girl's mind. It never seemed to strike her that a perfect understanding between husband and wife might be the surest means to promote Raoul's happiness. What she wanted was to give him happiness *herself*, to be indispensable to him, to keep him a true Breton of the Bretons—narrow, prejudiced and exclusive, with no wide, outside interests to carry him beyond the range of her own limited experience.

In all this there was a kind of savage innocence totally distinct from the low cunning and intrigue of one woman plotting to wrest a man's love from another.

Yvonne was not incapable of malice; was there not one little episode in the past, which always stood now, like a phantom, between her and Raoul, though she knew him to be in ignorance of it? But if anyone had fairly represented to her the actual moral wrong of her unreasoning, jealous devotion, she would have been overcome with horror at herself. To understand the state of her feelings, and to make allowance for her folly, it is necessary to take her as she was—a wild, ignorant child, with the uncontrolled impulses of childhood warring against the passionate heart of a woman.

She was happy, that winter, in her irresponsible way. Raoul was free. Once more he made a companion of her ; not, it is true, as in the old boy and girl days, but still enough to relieve the lonely monotony of her life. If he was rather distant and absent-minded, separated from her, mentally, by a great gulf of experience, which prevented them from meeting quite on the old free-and-easy footing, she consoled herself by thinking that, in time, the gravity would wear off and the light-heartedness return. She could not understand that his boyhood was over for ever, and that to the man, with his deeper thoughts and feelings, she was a mere child whom he would not dream of associating with anything serious.

Not that he undervalued her sympathy. Without it, he would have been doubly forlorn. It rendered him, as she wished, in some measure dependent on her for that unspoken comfort for which the strongest of us will crave at times.

Denise had indeed left a rival behind her in the little Breton girl, with her weird beauty and passionate impulsiveness.

The day after Raoul's return from Paris he fetched Yvonne to come out with him in the *Bon Espoir*. He did not tell her where he had been, nor did she ask him. But she guessed that something had occurred to make him more resigned to his fate, more than ever determined to throw useless regrets to the winds, and live his life as much as possible as if Denise Lenard had never crossed his path.

It was this that made Yvonne so happy as they sailed together in the little boat which had always been such a safe and trusted friend to Raoul. "He had come back to her," her heart kept singing : "He had come back to her." Denise, with her baneful charms, had passed away out of their lives, and, with her, all the misery and vague longing and smothered passions of those last, changeful months.

"Pourquoi pleurer le temps passé ?" she went on with her droning song ; "Hélas ! il ne revient point ! Les petits oiseaux ne pleurent pas."

"Comme une plume sur l'eau," broke in Raoul's deep voice, full of cynical meaning ; "l'amour des jeunes filles est léger."

Yvonne looked at him for a moment, then laughed and tossed back her head.

"Comme une pomme mûre sur une branche, l'amour des jeunes filles est solide," she sang joyously. "Comme une pomme piquée des vers, l'amour des jeunes filles est loyal."

"You are very gay, Yvonne," repeated Raoul.

"Yes. I told you why. To-day the winter has gone."

"Eh, bien ! What if it has ? For my part I rejoice to think that it has not gone for long. There is life in the winter ; storm and tempest and danger. It makes it worth while to be a man. The

summer is for women. But say, Yvonne, is your father coming home this year?"

"Oh, yes. In May. I had almost forgotten. He will be here for a month, a week, a day; who can tell? He is like the waves of the sea. He does not know how to be still."

"I think I shall ask him to take me with him on his next cruise," said Raoul quietly. "I am getting tired of Camper. It is time I saw something of life; of other lands."

The light died suddenly out of the girl's eyes. She caught her breath and stared blankly at him, without speaking.

Raoul was not looking at her. His eyes were fixed on that motionless bank of cloud on the horizon.

"It is time we turned back," he said suddenly; "I have been absent-minded. If we do not take care we shall be caught in the storm before we can get home. Get her head round, Yvonne. It is no use trying to sail. The wind, such as it is, is dropping more and more. I must take the oars."

Far as eye could see, to westward, stretched the wide, unruffled ocean, still and melancholy as some vast lake; sea and sky one uniform sunless grey, except where the thundercloud hung in the distance, its edges slowly turning into a lurid copper-colour, as though some unseen flame from the nether-world was slowly and pitilessly scorching them. Now and then came a low, broken rumble, like the sound of guns from a great distance. Otherwise all was silent, still, dreamlike, as if the dead-calm sea and sky were lying in wait, with arms in rest, until the appointed signal for some great contest.

The little boat held steadily on its way. Yvonne had left her former post and was rowing in the bow, her strong, lithe arms keeping excellent time with the long, vigorous strokes of her companion. She had left off singing; when Raoul spoke she scarcely answered, appearing to require all her strength for the physical effort she was making.

They rowed thus for more than half an hour, and had made good progress in the time. But Raoul, who read the sky like a book, was not too well satisfied.

A great drop of rain fell splashing into the boat; a breath of cold wind came sighing across the sea, darkening its quiet surface.

"Rain," said Raoul, turning his head to look at the coming thundercloud. "Did you bring a cloak, Yvonne? We shall be drenched in another half-hour."

"It does not matter. I am not afraid of water. Is there going to be a storm?"

"There will be rain," he answered evasively; "and we are still a good way from home. But if this breeze keeps up we shall be able to hoist the sail. Are you tired?"

"Tired? No. This is nothing."

There were more drops of rain, big and heavy ; and another little gust of wind. The flame-colour was burning all over the lower edge of the thundercloud that had been gradually spreading over the sky, until the bulk of it hung, black as pitch, in a great dense mass above their heads, carrying with it a chill blast that swept past them with a shivering moan.

Raoul hoisted the sail and Yvonne resumed her place at the helm. She saw that his keen blue eyes were full of anxiety, lightly though he spoke.

Suddenly the whole sky seemed to be torn and rent asunder. There was one vivid flash of lightning, followed by a terrific clap of thunder. Then again all was silent.

"That is the prelude," said Raoul, coolly ; "I hope the rest will be as magnificent. Sapristi ! Here comes the rain."

Everything seemed to come ! Rain, wind, thunder, lightning. The sails flung out with a clap of delight as the wind caught them ; the little boat scudded away over the rising waves like an arrow loosed from the bow.

"We shall have to make for the Baie des Nains," said Raoul. "The wind is with us, and we have done it before. Keep her head steady, Yvonne. How do you like this ?"

"Splendid ! splendid !" cried the girl ; "I love it."

"It is life. There is nothing else like it, after all. That was a flash. They are lighting up our way as if we were making a royal progress ! Salut ! my good friends !" exclaimed Raoul, waving his hat with boyish enthusiasm : "We refuse your enmity."

Between them and Camper lay the rocky promontory where the Chapelle de Notre Dame du Salut stood, and where Yvonne had her home. By the time they gained this point the storm, which, as often happens on the Coast of Finisterre, had suddenly raged into fury, would make it a risky undertaking to attempt to pass it. Had he been alone Raoul would have thought nothing of it, or would have lain outside until the storm abated. But with Yvonne in his care it was a different matter.

On this side of the promontory lay a little bay or inlet known as the Baie des Nains, from the extreme narrowness of the opening into its sheltered waters, through which it was said in the country round that none but a dwarf in his pigmy boat could venture in safety.

To anyone unversed in the treacheries of the coast this little bay presented a seductive aspect. It was more or less protected from the virulence of the winds, forming a kind of basin of which the calm waters seemed to invite the unwary mariner to trust himself to them from the fury of the high seas. Repeated calamities had taught the Camper fishermen the fallacy of this expectation ; friendly as the bay itself might be, there lay a hydra in wait at its entrance that few cared to encounter ; and many a boat had lain out at sea the whole

night rather than venture within the treacherous circle of rocks forming the Baie des Nains.

Raoul, however, was a prey to no such fears. He had brought the *Bon Espoir* in and out of the little gulf a hundred times in perfect safety. He knew the track as well as he knew the walks in his garden at home. The only difficulty consisted in keeping the boat under control in the storm.

"You are not afraid of the Baie des Nains, are you?" he asked Yvonne presently. "If so——"

"I—afraid!" she laughed. "I am a Bretonne."

"Very well. Keep your eye on me, and do exactly what I tell you. You are always an obedient 'man at the helm,' and now you must be doubly so. I shall have enough to do managing the sails."

By this time the rain was pouring down in torrents; every instant there crashed the thunderous artillery of Heaven. All around was black and grim as night, the gloom lit up constantly by the piercing lightning that darted in a lurid zig-zag from zenith to horizon. The wind, coming in wild gusts, made the gallant little boat sway to and fro, and bound like a war-horse over the splashing foam.

Yvonne, patient and obedient at the helm, sat with her dark eyes fixed on Raoul's face. Presently he looked at her, and nodded encouragement.

"You are a true daughter of the sea, Yvonne," he said. "Monsieur le Capitaine ought to be proud of you."

"You will not go with him!" she said breathlessly, her face full of piteous entreaty; "You are not really going away? *Raoul!*"

"Ah—perhaps not! Who can say? Who wants me here?"

"I do," she whispered passionately.

"Pauvre petite," he said kindly. "Are you so dull? You must come with us. We could not leave you behind. Now, Yvonne—attention. Keep cool. So—that will do it. A little more to the left! We shall be as safe as a baby in its cradle in a few minutes."

They were nearing the Baie des Nains. The narrow gulf leading into it was tossed and white with foam; one false motion of the hand at the helm would be enough to dash the boat on to the sharp rocks that lay hidden in wait for prey. Raoul trusted Yvonne; she had been there with him a score of times, and had learnt to understand his very glance. He often said that he would rather let her steer him through the most dangerous of passes than any fisherman in the place.

Her eyes were fixed on his face. Hands and heart were trembling, not with fear, but with an uncontrollable excitement.

Raoul, too, was not quite intent on their danger. Something in her last words, in her voice, in her poor little imploring face, had made his heart leap with a sudden new thought that, coming just then when all his old hopes were dead and buried, for a moment overcame his enforced calm and indifference.

Here, at his feet, was the love of a woman who would have given up everything in the world for his sake. He was alone—unhappy—bound only by the fragile fetters of social law to a woman who did not love him—who had forfeited his loyalty.

He looked up, and their eyes met in one of those long, passionate glances that will break down the barrier of years.

Then he roused himself with a start.

"What are you doing, Yvonne?" he exclaimed harshly. "*Starboard hard.*"

The helm had flown from her hands; there was a crash and shivering of timber; the little craft shuddered from bow to stern, swayed, and heeled over—and in another moment Yvonne and Raoul were swimming, for life or death, through the boiling surge.

CHAPTER XI.

A VISION.

"MADEMOISELLE LENARD, that was? Ah, yes. I recollect. Contracted some eccentric marriage, did she not? And has since been divorced. One must not pin one's faith on the virtuous professions of these women; do I not always say so?"

"You utter truisms, chère Marquise. Mademoiselle Lenard was the comet of a season; the young men carried her portrait next their hearts. The rest goes without saying. What else can you expect?"

"So this is the *ci-devant* actress? Well, she is certainly presentable."

"Be candid, madame; she is more than presentable; she is divine," said Monsieur le Comte d'Edmond, as he moved to greet the new-comer.

"So! That is the way the wind blows," sniffed the Marquise, levelling her gold-rimmed lorgnette upon Madame de Kériadec as she advanced into the salon. "For the last three months he has scarcely spoken to Alphonsine, and before that I was already contemplating the trousseau."

"Ah! From what I have heard you may rest assured that Madame de Kériadec is the *mot-de-l'enigme*," responded the other. "But that signifies little. For, at least he cannot marry her."

"What does she mean by forcing her way into society, she who was on the stage not two years ago?" cried the Marquise with increased ire. "It is an impertinence. Ah! Monsieur de Caromont! We are just discussing this Madame de Kériadec. Are you, also, one of her admirers?"

"The greatest, Marquise. She is adorable. You never saw her act? Ah, it was well worth seeing. But no doubt our amiable hostess is preparing some little games for our diversion; you know that she has a passion for charades. And with Madame de Kériadec

here, it would be a sin to lose the opportunity of hearing her recite. We are in luck to-night."

Such, evidently, was the opinion of most of the Comtesse de Mersac's male guests. There was soon a little crowd hovering round Denise, laughing, joking, flattering; the same to-night as they had been many nights before, and would be for many nights to come.

Denise had wearied of it long ago. But on the whole it caused her less trouble than most things and sometimes even afforded her a spurious excitement, which she was beginning to suppose was the nearest approach to enjoyment attainable in this world.

This very lack of interest added to her charm; it suited her "type," and piqued her admirers into keener desire to arouse in her some spark of genuine emotion.

Anyone seeing her for the first time, in a salon full of the prettiest and wittiest women in Paris, herself shining brightest of all, would have imagined her very well content with her life and surroundings.

Raoul would hardly have recognised her. This self-possessed woman, in yellow satin, lounging back in her chair with a lazy consciousness that she was looking very beautiful, and that every glance from her indolently contemptuous eyes flew like a shaft to some susceptible heart, was a woman of the world, not a hot-headed girl like the Denise who had chafed and fretted at the restricted dulness of life at Camper. She only differed from the fashionable women around her in that she accepted all homage with a lofty nonchalance that sorely tried the amour-propre of certain gallants eager to ingratiate themselves into her favour; and because there was not even a pretence of sincerity in her dealings with the gay world in which she had chosen to cast her lot. For a woman to be worshipped by some dozen different persons, it is a foregone conclusion that she must be a humbug to eleven out of the twelve, if not to them all.

But Madame de Kériadec's form of humbug was of the most honest kind (if one may use such a paradox), and not intended to deceive anyone. Since she went into society she determined to make the best of it, and to beguile the time as best suited her fancy. To be lively, and bewitching, and admired, was all part of the wearisome game; but she did not endeavour to conceal that she was bored to extinction, and only indulged in such frivolity because she could find no more amusing substitute.

"If I could return to the stage I might be happy," she used to think. "But there is no question of that. To all things there is a limit, and that is where I find the limit to my freedom."

And why? That, none could understand. She had separated from her husband, and was virtually her own mistress. Judging from past events, surely it weighed very little with her what Raoul thought of her actions; henceforth, what would he be to her but a reminiscence?

"Yes ; I know. I understand that I am an imbecile," she replied to any remonstrances. "But my mind is made up, once and for all. Do not worry me on the subject."

For my part, I am inclined to think that this determination was prompted, unknown to herself, by some dim sense of honour and faith ; some unreasoning loyalty to the man to whom she was bound, in the sight of God, though by no ties of mutual love and sympathy. Perhaps, too, there was a sudden wild fear of the consequences of her recklessness, now that the crisis had come, and a half superstitious resolution not to widen the gulf by any irreparable fault on her side.

This, at least, is how she tried to explain to herself the inconsistency in her conduct ; and if there was a deeper, underlying motive, she was too blind or too proud to recognise it.

It was now the end of January. For the last two months she had given herself up to a whirl of gaiety—dances, theatres, suppers ; late hours by night ; vapid idleness by day. One or two leaders of society, instigated by Comte d'Edmond, had "taken her up," and made her "the fashion." Since she left Camper she had been in the midst of jealousies, rivalries, intrigues. She had not made a single friend, in the true sense of the term ; eleven hours out of the twelve were deplorably dull ; she disliked her acquaintances and despised herself. On reconsideration, it seemed scarcely worth while to have quarrelled with Raoul if this was all she received in exchange.

Yet why should it be thus ? Why did she turn with such distaste from all that she had once longed for ?

This question puzzled her continually ; though the answer was simple enough, and one that acted as an anodyne to good old Madame Lenard's tender heart, which had suffered untold pangs over the shortcomings of her wilful niece.

Denise's girlish desires had been those of ignorance. Now that she understood the frivolity and vice that governed what she used to consider a life of harmless excitement, her better nature rose up and asserted itself ; asserted itself with a strength that often made her writhe with shame when she looked back on the folly of her past conduct. If some of the women with whom she now associated deserved opprobrium for lowering the standard of womanly virtue in the eyes of the world, did she not equally merit censure for lowering the standard in the eyes of, at least, one person ; and for having flung away her chance of making—or keeping—at least *one* man a little better than his fellows ?

It was this remorse, this inconvenient conscientiousness that ruined Denise's prospects of amusing herself, or of alleviating her troubles, by rushing wildly into a life of dissipation. It is, in truth, such a poor, played-out subterfuge of the unhappy, that it is a marvel how so many weary souls still flatter themselves that for them, at least, it contains the blessed Lethe.

Every morning that winter Denise had congratulated herself on being no longer shivering at Camper, with wild winds rocking the Beacon Tower, and wet mists from the sea blurring the landscape like a dull, grey shroud. As for Raoul, she thought of him as little as possible. But when his memory was forced upon her, as, for instance, at night before she fell asleep, it was always as she had last seen him—in danger, fighting against wind and wave in absolute carelessness of life. Often, when she came home tired after a forced excitement, she had a horrible nightmare, in which Raoul was struggling against a huge, white-crested breaker, from which there was no chance of escape.

She was angry and ashamed at her weakness ; but argued from it that she had shown discretion in leaving Camper before its dreary loneliness had utterly destroyed her nervous system ; and the more such grim fancies assailed her, the more she sought alleviation in outward gaiety. Sometimes she succeeded in this well enough ; but there were occasions on which her whole soul revolted against the tone of the society in which she mixed, with a dreary conviction that in time she, too, must inevitably be swept away in the current, and become as lax and empty-headed as the rest.

She experienced this feeling very strongly on the evening of the Comtesse de Mersac's reception. It happened to be a heavy, sultry night, strangely so for the time of year ; the air charged with electricity ; and Denise was afflicted with one of those emotional temperaments that are so keenly susceptible to atmospheric influences.

Her nerves felt strung to the highest pitch ; her eyes and cheeks glowing with a feverish brightness that enhanced her loveliness ; there was a restless expectancy about her that belied her usual half-assumed indolence.

"You are in the humour to act, to-night," said d'Edmond, after greeting her with the easy familiarity of an intimate friend. "And that is fortunate, madame, for I am commissioned by our hostess to implore you to favour us with a recitation. Madame de St. Breteuil has organised some charades. That we shall be bored by them is as certain as that she will forget her rôle at the most critical moment. It is for you to restore us, by a *bonne-bouche* kept for the last."

"Eh bien ! reply to Madame la Comtesse, with my respects, that I am not in the humour to supply her guests with a *bonne-bouche*."

"Impossible. You are not to be let off. We have been too indulgent to you already. Night after night you evade us with, 'I am tired'—'not in the humour'—excuse after excuse. Why, you would not even assist in the Marquise de B.'s theatricals. Everyone is wondering what has come to you."

"I detest amateur theatricals," answered Denise : "quarrels at rehearsal ; at least three stage-managers to obey and conciliate ; Madame this envious of Madame that, because her rôle contains

some more telling passage than is in her own ; cabals and discontents without end ; and finally, a lamentable and incontestible failure. Those are the conditions of your amateur theatricals."

"You were not so bitter at Camper," he rejoined. "If I recollect aright you were the keenest of us all."

"Ah, at Camper. One is easily distracted at so dead-alive a place. Besides, I have forgotten the trick of it. It never was more than that with me, though some generous people were kind enough to credit me with talent. I could not act now if my life depended on it."

"Is that true ? I should have fancied that you had power, now, to act as you never dreamed of acting in the old days. You have had your experience."

"I have bought it. Bought it with my old enthusiasms. Really, I think now, of all things, that they are not worth the trouble."

"The *on dit* is, that you have an attachment."

"Then the *on dit* is egregiously false in its calculations. Briefly, I do not intend to recite to-night."

Upon d'Edmond reporting this decision there was a general chorus of remonstrance. There seemed to be a unanimous determination not to let her off this time. Some had a sincere desire to see and admire her talent. Others (chiefly of her own sex) were resolved not to let her past be forgotten. She had been an actress, no one could deny that ; and no matter how irreproachable she had been, this fact kept her on a level below that of her present companions, which she must not be allowed to forget. As a matter of fact, Denise was more proud than ashamed of her acting days, knowing that she had done more honest work during her short professional career than these society dolls would do in the whole course of their lives.

Nevertheless, she did not intend to break her rule. Once yield, and the old love of her art would arise as vigorously as ever, perhaps not to be resisted. And she was just enough conscious of her own moral weakness to know that though strong enough to *flee* temptation she had not always strength to resist it.

"What ridiculous affectation," said the Marquise, in an aside to d'Edmond. "No woman of the world would have such gauche manners when asked to oblige her hostess. You must really induce her to give in."

D'Edmond felt annoyed with Denise for her obstinacy. It kept her on an irreproachable pinnacle whereon he did not care to see any of his friends ; it placed them so far out of his reach !

"Oh, I cannot. Do not tease me," said Denise, impatiently, as he renewed his protests. "I do not feel up to it to-night ; this sultry weather makes me perfectly foolish. There ! was not that thunder ? Ah ! I wish I had gone home before it began. It is stifling here."

"Madame, we will not listen to excuses. Anyone may see that you are in the mood for inspiration. You have never looked so

beautiful—pardon ! Do not annihilate me. If you object, I will never utter another compliment in your hearing.—But seriously, what can you urge against it ? Are we not all friends here ? It is not like a public appearance. Believe me, you are nursing a chimera. Your husband has by this time completely lost all interest in your actions. It is part of your bargain.”

Denise shrugged her shoulders, pouted, and muttered that she had no other motives than fatigue and disinclination. But her heightened colour showed that the thrust had gone home ; and the Marquise rushed in to follow up d’Edmond’s advantage by another poisoned dart.

“ Doubtless Madame de Kériadec fears another esclandre—like that of which we all heard, some months ago. But rest assured, madame, that in the salon of Madame de Mersac all interlopers will be turned from the door, even should they come in the guise of jealous husbands. Is it not so, Comte ? ”

Denise sprang up, with a low, passionate exclamation.

“ Ah, well ! Since you will have it so, I am ready,” she said recklessly. “ Comte, you may signify to Madame de Mersac that I am at her service.”

She flung herself back into her chair, and with half-closed eyes waited until she should be called forward. She did not conceal her annoyance, and resolutely kept her head averted from her companions, on the pretext of trying to recall some lines appropriate for recitation.

“ What is it to be ? Tragedy or comedy ? ” asked d’Edmond.

“ Tragedy,” she answered shortly. “ Who can talk comedy in a thunderstorm ? ”

“ Do not be afraid. It is passing off. The last clap was fainter. Ah ! Here comes de Mersac for you.”

There was quite a little flutter of excitement when Madame de Kériadec was led forward by the master of the house.

“ Madame de Kériadec has kindly consented to give us a recitation from ‘ Bajazet,’ ” he announced ; adding, with a suave bow to Denise : “ Roxane will never have been more worthily represented.”

“ Merci, monsieur.”

For a moment, she stood looking upwards, her brows drawn together, as though seeking inspiration. She looked very beautiful—for the time being lifted out of herself by an influx of emotion ; and when she began to speak, her voice seemed to vibrate and tremble with passion.

“ Ma rivale à mes yeux s’est enfin déclarée
Voilà sur quelle foi je m’étais assurée !
Depuis six mois entiers j’ai cru que, nuit et jour,
Ardente elle veillait au soin de mon amour :
Et c’est moi qui, du sien ministre trop fidèle,
Semble depuis six mois ne veiller que pour elle ;
Qui me suit . . . qui me suit. . . . ”

Her voice ceased abruptly. Her rapt eyes were strained, as though they saw some dread sight far away. Her lips were parted, like those of one in an anguish of terror.

For a moment the spectators believed it to be part of her rôle, and were beginning a little burst of applause when a rolling crash of thunder broke the silence, rousing Denise from her strange, weird abstraction.

"Ah!" she cried, covering her eyes with her hands. "That terrible thunder! It kills me." And she would have fallen had not d'Edmond sprung forward and helped her to a chair.

"Bah! How silly I am," she said, trying to regain her composure. "You must excuse me, my friends. I am tired; and I am never able to control myself in a storm. If you will permit me, Comtesse, I will send for my carriage."

"Are you sure you are not ill? . . . Did you feel faint? . . . Did you see anything to alarm you? . . . On my word, madame, one would have said you saw the earth opening before you."

"I am very foolish," she answered, smiling, and shrugging her shoulders in the old nonchalant way. "Do not any of you worry on my account. Eh bien! Yes . . . I did have a kind of illusion. I am so easily excited, you know. I imagined I saw a storm—a wreck—a man drowning. Some *bêtise* of the kind. I assure you it was nothing. My brain was overtaxed. You see that you must not ask me to act again."

D'Edmond was, as usual, ready to escort her to her carriage.

"A vision? That is interesting," he said, as he led her downstairs. "A wreck—and a man drowning. Might one be permitted to ask if it was a friend in danger?"

"It was not a friend."

"Merely a man who is nothing to you?"

"Merely a man who is nothing to me," she assented, but flushed, nevertheless, up to the roots of her hair.

D'Edmond watched her carriage drive away, then stood a few moments out in the street, smoking his cigar meditatively.

"So!" he said to himself; "an hysterical fit in which the despised one rises to the heroic on account of an imaginary peril. C'est imbecile!"

CHAPTER XII.

"SOUVENT FEMME VARIE."

"My dear child! What have you been doing to yourself? You are like a ghost. One would say you had been up all night, seeing apparitions," exclaimed Madame Lenard, as Denise came languidly into the salon next morning, looking very white and depressed.

Denise rubbed her hands over the little wood fire.

"Ah! How I detest the winter. It is cold enough for Siberia. And just listen to the wind."

"The thunderstorm last night has upset the weather. But that need not make you look like this. My child, confide in me. You are ill—unhappy. What is it?"

"I slept badly; and had disagreeable dreams. That is all. But I am rather depressed in consequence. Oh, la, la! I wish it were summer. I am sick of Paris and Parisians. Cannot we fly away to fresh climes, where we know nobody, dear aunt?"

"You—a Parisienne—to give vent to such sentiments! *Fi donc!*" exclaimed Madame Lenard disdainfully.

"I am Parisienne in this, that I love variety," said Denise. "Life, as it is at present, is tiresome beyond expression. Oh, for the old days, and the beloved theatre."

"You would never be happy under any circumstances. You are the incarnation of discontent."

"But you love me, all the same. And it your fault that I am as I am. You should not have spoilt me so you and my uncle."

"I know. I know," sighed her aunt. "It was a deplorable mistake. I shall never pardon myself—never. It ought to be a warning to you, Denise, if ever you have any chil——"

"But I shall not, so that is all right," said Denise quickly. "And the world will be spared another disgrace like me. Let us be grateful for small mercies."

Madame Lenard shook her head and murmured dolefully, "*Hélas,*" as she always did after one of Denise's flippant remarks, and signified her disapproval by dropping the conversation.

Her heart ached for the girl, and for the young husband whose life she had spoilt. But it was beyond her arts to find a remedy. The future lay with the de Kériadecs themselves. No one else could mend or mar the present uncomfortable state of affairs. Sometimes, deceived by Denise's assumed gaiety, she began to think that she really had no feelings, but was simply a heartless butterfly, who cared for nothing but her own comfort and enjoyment.

"If only she were not so provokingly pretty!"

But there it was! She was young, beautiful, charming. Absolutely alone and independent; a woman who lived apart from her husband, owing to an unfortunate "incompatibility of temper." It was lamentable. What dangers beset her, what trials, what temptations!

To-day she looked ill and unhappy. Poor Madame Lenard began to dread all manner of misfortunes. Being of a sentimental turn of mind, she imputed most of the troubles of young people to love-sorrows; and now, the thought that worried her was that perhaps Denise had a grief of this nature, and that the cause of it was *not* Raoul de Kériadec.

"Tiresome, tiresome child! How I should like to be angry with

her, and tell her how scandalously she has behaved," thought Madame Lenard, trying to steel her heart; then, for the hundredth time, relenting as she looked at the face she loved, weak though she knew herself to be, better than anything else on earth.

Denise was lying back in a low chair, her hands clasped behind her head, her little feet, in the daintiest of red morocco shoes, stretched before her on the white rug, and her brows knit together as if she were trying to solve some perplexing problem.

"Do you know, my aunt, I am seriously thinking of running down to Camper for one night; just to vary the monotony," she said presently, stretching out her arms with a yawn. "I die of ennui here."

Madame Lenard raised her eyebrows, without replying. If Denise chose to jest on serious subjects she did not mean to encourage her. Not for one moment did she expect her to act upon her words. Denise was often outrageously flippant, but so far her actions had fallen very much below her threatened intentions.

"I think if I were again to realise how outlandish it is down there I might, once more, duly appreciate Paris," went on Denise. "At any rate, if Raoul and I were to meet, there would be a little excitement of some kind. Oh—a splendid idea strikes me! Why should not he and I change places? I stay at Camper for a month; Raoul come to Paris? You say I am too frivolous; and I am sure Raoul is not frivolous enough. My plan would give us both the proper leaven. But, oh, how dull I should be under the régime. He would have the advantage over me."

"I wish he would try it! On my faith, I do," cried Madame Lenard, losing her temper. "Perhaps you would be sorry when you had lost him for good. And that *would* be the result, let me tell you, if he became like you. You would then despise him as he despises you."

"Despises me—Raoul?" cried Denise; "I should like to see it. But you, too, are against me. It is unfair."

"I should have imagined that you had enough new friends to make it a matter of insignificance to you what your old ones think. Whether they are such good friends is for you to decide. Without doubt they are more amusing. But we shall see. Are not some of them coming to déjeuner to day? I think I hear voices outside."

"Ah! I had forgotten," and Denise jumped up to scan her pale face in the looking-glass over the mantelpiece.

"It is annoying to look like this," she murmured, rubbing her cheeks; "they will give me no peace until they have found out the cause."

The next minute she had turned to meet her friends, laughing and chatting with all her wonted vivacity. As it happened, they were none of the new companions alluded to by Madame Lenard, but

the familiar trio, Comte d'Edmond, Madame de Fréville, and young de Caromont ; nevertheless, the old lady treated them with a certain coldness. She was well enough accustomed to a Bohemian freedom and merriment, but the friends her husband admitted to his house were very different from these fast society people, who were merely noisy without being in any way amusing or witty.

"How Denise can submit to them !" she wondered. "Léonie de Fréville has no more pretension to refinement than a lady's maid ; and de Caromont would still be at college if I were his mother."

But Denise could not long sustain her false spirits. She became nervous and absent-minded. She could not eat ; and the colour she had rubbed into her cheeks was as transient as a bubble.

Such unusual depression did not long escape the inquisitorial gaze of her companions. They had come there bent on discovering the cause of her strange conduct the preceding evening ; and Madame de Fréville was not likely to be restrained by any overstrained feelings of delicacy from putting the most point-blank questions and insisting on an answer.

"Ah, by the way, Denise," she began suddenly, "the whole world is talking of you. It is reported that you had a vision last night at the de Mersac's reception. Is it true ? I am all curiosity. Come, confide in us. We are amongst friends."

"Oh, that ? It was nothing," said Denise. "A mere faintness."

"No, no ; you confessed more than that at the time. Madame Lenard, perhaps you can enlighten us ?"

"I ? I know nothing about it. What was it, my child ? Why did you not tell me ?"

"Because, as I have said, there was nothing to tell," said Denise impatiently, and blushing vividly. "I was upset by the thunder. Please do not allude to it. I am ashamed of my childishness. Talk of something else. Comte, have you nothing to say ?"

"Ah—well—yes, the weather. What a terrific day we are having. It must recall to you the winter gales at Camper."

"Oh, yes ; and that reminds me," broke in Madame de Fréville ; "Someone did mention that your vision had something to do with a wreck. Was it so ? And pray, who was the fortunate individual who could rouse your sympathies so strongly ? You see we have all assumed that there *was* an individual in the case."

"And what if I say there was not, my dear romantic Léonie ?"

"I shall not believe you. One does not go into hysterics over a mere wreck. We know better than that."

"Most likely the scene was Camper, and the individual, Monsieur de Kériadec," said de Caromont, who always blurted out the wrong thing.

"Or Monsieur de Caromont himself," replied Denise lightly ; "that would account for my agitation, would it not ?"

"I incline to de Caromont's view," put in d'Edmond; "only it is curious that a mere fancy should have so affected Madame de Kériadec."

"Enough of this bêtise. Cannot we talk of someone else than Denise?" exclaimed Madame Lenard, struggling to be heard. "Can anyone tell me if it is true that Madame St. Roche is selling her jewels to defray her son's debts? I have always said that Maurice is a scapegrace."

But her well meant efforts were useless. Madame de Fréville had a little spite against Denise, such as one pretty woman is apt to have against another, and she enjoyed putting her at a disadvantage.

At the same time, for the sake of human nature it is to be hoped that none of them would have pursued the subject further if they could have understood what Denise was suffering from their pertinacity.

She was undergoing actual torture. The strange scene that had flashed before her mental vision the night before haunted her with strange persistency. It had kept her awake all night. How could she sleep, with that horrible presentiment hanging over her and repeating over and over again in her ears that perhaps, at that very time, Raoul was tossing on the fierce Atlantic waves in his little craft, never to be seen again until his corpse was washed ashore in the storm? All the time her friends were mocking and questioning her, she was momentarily expecting to hear the tidings that she was a widow—freed, at last, from the fetters against which she had so fiercely rebelled. It was little wonder that she at last lost control over herself and showed that underneath her mask of idle indifference lay the old hot, impulsive temper of her girlhood.

D'Edmond's remark, "I do not see why it should have so much affected Madame de Kériadec," stung her with a keen sense of the indignity of her position, which laid her open to such undisguised imputations of dislike to her husband; and though she laughingly shrugged her shoulders, d'Edmond saw that he had blundered, and was preparing to remedy his mistake, when Madame de Fréville rushed in with:

"Oh, have no fear on that point, Denise. We all know that Monsieur de Kériadec has a guardian angel to keep him from danger. That wild little Breton girl will have lured him into a safe haven, rest assured. Ah! He is a clever fellow, that husband of yours, Denise. Not but what it is perfectly justifiable. I should expect nothing else of my good Paul."

"Ah! so that is the way the wind lies?" cried de Caromont. "I have been dense. Now I recollect several occasions at Camper where they two, posing as martyrs, fled from our pernicious society. She was pretty, that little Mademoiselle Hévin."

"I think you forget that you are speaking of my husband," interrupted Denise suddenly.

The blood was rushing hotly through her veins; her heart was bursting with unreasoning passion. Was it true, what they were saying? Impossible! He could not, he *dared* not transfer his love from her to a wild little girl like Yvonne!

"Oh, my dear, that is understood," answered Madame de Fréville. "Being one's husband makes very little difference. And we all know he is not good enough for you. Often enough you have implied as much yourself."

"I find I was mistaken. It is I who am not good enough for him," said Denise, greatly agitated. "Let us at least be honest."

"Yes; yes. Be tranquil. We all of us comprehend," said d'Edmond, trying to soothe her, and really intending to say nothing objectionable. "Only, in affairs of the heart goodness is at a discount. We love where Destiny tells us, and that is not always where we ought. We did not mean to offend you, madame. It is only what you have led us to suppose; if we are wrong, I, for one, apologise from my heart."

"You are wrong, then," she said in a low, excited voice, rising as she spoke, and looking at her companions with a kind of defiance whilst she made what seemed to her, in some sort, a public atonement to Raoul. "You are very wrong if you think I do not love my husband. More than that, I have made arrangements to return to him at once—to-day—this afternoon if possible. You will understand from this," she added, trying to speak gaily, "that, being a woman, I have an amount of packing to do before I start; I must, therefore, beg you to excuse me if I break up our little party now. I thank you, my friends, for your kindness to me whilst I have been in Paris."

D'Edmond was the first to recover from his mortified surprise. Saying that he would not for a moment impede madame in her preparations, he saluted her with a profound and half-mocking bow, and left the room, followed by de Caromont and Madame de Fréville, who could scarcely wait until they were out of hearing to make some not very complimentary remarks on the imbecility of poor dear Madame de Kériadec.

After they had gone, Madame Lenard took Denise's feverish hands in hers, and looked searchingly into her eyes.

"Is it true?" she asked. "Not an hysterical folly after your excitement and your sleepless night? Are you really going?"

"Yes, yes. I cannot wait any longer. Let me go by the next train. If I find him still—still alive—it may be that my love has come too late to be of any value. But I cannot let him die without knowing that it has come at last," she cried, bursting into wild tears. "For he will die. I saw it—I have had a warning—a conviction. And if I am too late, he will never know that I love him with all my heart and soul."

(To be concluded.)

THE DISCOVERY OF THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE.

AN old desolate garret, in an old desolate house. The walls were mouldy with a damp, green mould; the little lattice window with its deep side-ports and sill was dim with dirt, and dark with the ivy that grew outside. The deal boards of the floor were strewn with a few dry rushes, which hardly attempted to hide the spots beneath. And these were spots and stains of all kinds; green spots and blue stains; spots that looked like blood, and stains that looked like fire. One large charred blotch marked where the oil of vitriol had upset and left the traces of its action; another, where the contents of a retort had exploded, and falling while hot on the floor, had for a moment set it in flame. Tables and shelves covered with bottles and retorts filled the room. A small furnace with crucibles heaped up beside it showed that the alchemist, whoever he was, had not spared expense or trouble in fitting up his laboratory. An instrument, contrived with considerable skill with lenses of various powers, showed also that he was not ignorant of the power of the great agent: Light. While on the floor amongst the rushes lay a large box, with knobs and drawers and wheels of all kinds, the object of which is uncertain.

"Grandpapa," said a little golden-haired fairy, peeping in at the door. "Grandpapa, look here. What's this?"

An old, old man turned round in answer to the query. He was not dirty; neither was he dressed in an old snuff-coloured suit. True, his fingers were slightly stained; for in old age at times the fingers tremble; but at all events he had been punished for his carelessness, since the acids that stained had also burnt him.

"What have you got hold of, little one?" said the philosopher in a mellow voice; the one trace of his youth that he still retained. "What a dirty old box. Open it."

"It won't open," said the child, in a voice which expressed at once dissatisfaction, wonder and certainty. "I've tried and tried."

"Just so; it won't," replied the philosopher, half to himself. But he was thinking of another secret beyond this old box.

"Well, fairy," he continued, "leave the box with me and I will try it again—I want to think now." So the child left the room, almost pouting at the loss of her wonder.

The old man sat on in a brown study. He had given much of his lifetime to the pursuit of this flying phantom—the Philosopher's Stone. In the earlier part of his career he had been in India, and India was then a land of romance and wonders. Dim hints and misty warnings that he had heard there had confirmed him in his

passion for the science he had long leaned to. Coming home, he had married, and now lived in this topmost garret, while his son and daughter-in-law with their family kept the rest of the house for him.

"All in vain, I think," said he. "All as useless as this old mystery," he groaned to himself; and kicked the box as he spoke.

It sprang open. He was half frightened, the thing had happened so unexpectedly. Then recovering himself he stooped down and picked up the box.

"Ah! lined with asbestos: that promises well. Come, little Fay, you have unearthed a treasure. Good gracious!"

The old man exclaimed aloud in his surprise. The old box was made of gold—solid gold. Crusted, and, apparently, intentionally so, with dirt and a thin coating of some amalgam; yet beyond doubt beneath lay the Queen of metals herself. His interest was now at boiling point. He placed the box on the table, and with a penknife carefully picked at the contents, for there was some black substance within.

At last, with the tenderest care, he drew from it an old manuscript, and placed it on the table at his side. Then he looked again in the box, and could see nothing except one or two dark stains on the bottom and sides. No; this old manuscript was all it contained.

"I wonder who wrote it? I wonder what he put it there for?" meditated the old man, glancing at the golden box. Then he eagerly turned to the manuscript. It was as dry as a bone. The first page that the alchemist turned broke across like scorched paper. It must be, it was, very old. "This won't do; we must handle it more carefully," he muttered, and he turned each folio with a penknife.

There were seventy-five pages in all—closely written in that peculiarly beautiful manuscript which was only begotten of long practice in the Scriptorium of a monastery. When he came to the last page he looked to find some note by the author. His eyes gleamed as he looked—he had indeed seen a name. Written in the same careful writing was this word—

"Gravinus."

For the next quarter of an hour the old man sat staring vacantly.

It may be that some account of the man whose name made such an impression on the alchemist may not be unacceptable, for with the loss of the major portion of his writings he has also lost the greater part of his reputation.

Gravinus was a Spanish monk who flourished about 1050 A.D. His writings are distinguished by a certain crudeness of exposition and unvarnished distinctness of expression which marks the man's character. The fragments which remain to us are full of a strange kind of learning, far commoner in the days of the schoolmen than two centuries earlier. Of the man himself we know but little. One incident alone remains of his earlier life.

He tells us how one spring morning he left his village home, and rushed away, pursued by the village rabble. Not two miles from the place a stream ran violently along between the steep banks, and runs to this day. Into this the boy plunged, hoping, as he says, with the torrent to wash away the contamination of his earlier life.

It did so; but he soon sinned sufficiently to stain his soul black again. While employed as clerk in the court of the Emperor Otho II., he betrayed his master, then on one of his Apulian expeditions; fell into the hands of bandits, who were only deterred by fear of the Papal malediction from putting their captives to death.

With unexampled audacity he again presented himself at the Imperial court, and, strange to say, was again received into favour.

He himself tells the tale of his last and most terrible treachery.

As the pupil of Gerbert, he was even then one of the most learned necromancers of the day. He knew, above all, the composition and action of vegetable poisons, and, doubtless, had not his great work "*De Venenis*" been lost, much of the mystery which surrounds the mediæval period of the social history of Italy might be dispelled.

He tells how he was employed by Stephanía to prepare the poison with which that fair avenger destroyed the Emperor; and then, blackening even this record of treachery, he turned, viper-like, on the hand that had fed him—still he tells the story of his own shame—and administered the same poison to Gerbert, then Pope Silvester II., who is more generally supposed to have died by the hand of Stephanía.

With all his vileness the man was not without a certain rough kind of honesty. The information contained in his writings is always reliable, which is more than can be said for other pretenders to chemical knowledge. The old alchemist in discovering this manuscript, in all probability written by the very hand of the old monk, had lighted on a wonder, which was valuable, quite apart from any intrinsic worth it might have. As for that intrinsic value, it would be well to examine at once, to see what it might be, lest the ancient pages should crumble from exposure to the air.

Hour after hour the old man sat there reading with difficulty the crabbed Latin interspersed with obsolete alchemical terms. Again and again the little child came and knocked at the door. Grandpapa said "presently," and the messenger went back again.

At last the door opened and the old man came out. At dinner everyone noticed how radiant his face was, and how silent his tongue; but he stopped all inquiries, and immediately the meal was finished returned to his room.

"Surely," he said softly as he shut the door, "I have my queen at last in my grasp. Oh, my fair gold, to have escaped all but this old monk, and to come to your lover at last!"

He flung open the little lattice window and thrust his head out, hoping to lengthen the enjoyment of his discovery. Then he quickly

drew it in again, lest time should fail him. The man's nerves were overstrung with excitement; he was well-nigh mad with joy. He snatched up the tome and read this sentence aloud, that he might hear the words themselves. The passage was in Latin, and may be translated thus :

"For know this, my reader, thou shalt by my means find a certain gaseous vapour stifling in odour. Take then of aqua pura one sextarius (about a pint) and do as I shall bid thee. Place therein oil of vitriol, whereby it shall become hot, even unto boiling. Then place the end of a damp cord in it and tie the other extremity unto a high tree in a churchyard. If a storm of lightning shall come to pass, mayhap thou shalt perceive the gas arising from the bowl. Or, do thou this : take a basin (again sextarius) of the oil of vitriol, and add thereto ferrum, and shortly a seething shall happen, and the gas shall arise.

"Now this gas is the determinate of all things, wherein the ancient philosophers did greatly err, etc. etc. And as all things are built up" (he uses the Greek word ἀνοικοδομέω strangely enough) "of this gas, so may all things also be returned to it.

"Wherefore then having taken such a volume of this gas, as thou dost require ——"

"The next sentence is in cypher," mused the alchemist. "I wonder how to find the key? Unless I can discover it the rest is useless. Horrible!" And he read on.

"This shalt thou do to find gold, the Queen of Metals. For myself from the way that I learned it, I may not use it; for neither may the treasure-finder find treasure for himself; nor the prophet prophecy his own end. But I am sure that this way will arrive at a good termination, for this iron box my servant turned to gold at my directions, and him I slew lest he should reveal the secret."

"What a villain!" ejaculated the old man. But he knew too much of human nature to be surprised at the inconsistency of the old author in killing his servant to preserve his secret, and at the same time—fearful that it should perish—publishing it in this book; or, after having published it, writing the vital part of the recipe in a difficult cypher. It was just such a trifling with common sense as the old alchemist himself under like circumstances would have been the first to indulge in.

He sat down again at his little desk, and settled himself to the weary labour of discovering a clue to the cypher. He numbered the letters and found that they were in the ordinary proportion of Latin vowels and consonants; there had been therefore no substitution in value. Hour after hour passed, and the watchman at intervals made his customary cry: "Half past eleven and a rainy night;" "Half past twelve and the rain hath stopped;" but still the old man worked on, almost in despair.

At last his face lit up with a triumphant satisfaction. He was on

the track of the secret. The preceding sentences, read backwards, themselves explained it. Afraid lest the clue should remain undiscovered, the old monk had written a memorandum to this effect in sympathetic ink at the end, and the heat of the old man's dry hand had just brought the characters into sight.

He trembled with joy. For a moment he thought of going to sleep with the secret discovered, and reserving the delight of the actual experiment of the marvellous fact until he awoke, refreshed, on the morrow. Then he remembered that he might never wake again, and that thought drove all others away. He would that very evening bring the wonder out of darkness into light.

Slowly he spelt out the recipe, word by word, claspings his tremulous hands together at the close of every sentence, to suppress, as it were, the excitement that almost forced him to shout his joy aloud. How often had he himself been on the verge of this discovery; how often others; and its very simplicity rendered it certain of concealment. Read out this? not he. Walls had ears, even in the dead of night. So he contented himself with poring over the mystery, now a mystery no longer, with very great delight and wonderment.

All the materials he needed he had by him. The one instrument necessary was complicated; but that he had also. The strange machine of knobs and wheels, already mentioned, would with a slight alteration be sufficient. He made his arrangements, and then sat down once more to gloat over the manuscript.

For an hour or more he sat thus, making notes of his evening's work—for he was a methodical old man—reading, and examining the curious fretted spring of the golden box. Then he rose and opened a small cupboard. On the single shelf lay an ingot of zinc, covered with dust. He had placed it there twenty-seven and a half years ago, when he first began his researches, reserving it for the first actual experiment with the philosopher's stone, should he ever discover it. He had often opened the door and gazed at the ingot, but never before had he touched it, since the day, those many years ago, when he first laid it there. Now he took it down and placed it on the table.

Then he went to the machine, and pulling out a small drawer lined with glass, took from it an oblong mould which had formed within it. The mould was of a transparent substance, the colour greenish grey with a certain metallic lustre. He held it up to the morning sun, which at that moment struck through the grimy panes, and instantly the whole room was irradiated with a glorious hundred-coloured light, conspicuous among which was a strong beam of rich golden yellow. The old man looked at it earnestly, and then laid the stone quietly down on the table.

"This, then," said he, "is the Philosopher's Stone."

Then he sank back in his old worm-eaten chair and burst into a violent passion of weeping. This was the "At last."

In a few minutes he recovered, rose again from his chair, and made

the first experiment. He touched the ingot. Instantly the whole metal changed colour. It flushed an almost coppery-red, and then gradually subsided into the rich, soft, golden colour of the purest gold. "That is enough," said the old man with a smile.

He had been preternaturally still ever since the actual discovery of the substance, and after this first success he was quietly laying the stone down again with the pious words: "In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us," when a strange and terrible thing happened.

The old man's hand was yet on the stone, when its extremity touched the old book in which he had read the secret of its creation. On the instant a flash, as of lightning, sprang from the point of contact. The alchemist fell heavily to the floor, his body half charred to cinder: the book was dust: the stone resolved to its original gases. The creator, the creation, and the power of creating had alike been shattered to fragments in an instant.

By the kindness of Sir Hugh I have been able to give this account of the last experiment of the old alchemist. He adds the few following particulars, which explain partly the preciseness of his account of the philosopher's last moments.

Sir Hugh's father, the alchemist's son, not hearing the old man retire to bed, sat up to await him. He had fallen asleep in his chair, and the sun which shot over the philosopher's stone also woke him from his slumbers. He ran up to the garret, and from outside the door heard the last words of his father and then his heavy fall. He dashed open the door, in fear and trembling of some great accident, and rushed in. The golden ingot lay beside the golden box on the table; the machine was on the floor; and across the dry rushes lay the old alchemist, with a strange smile on his face, the light of the rising sun flooding his charred body.

They have never touched the room since. The fatal gold lies beside the golden box—each under a thick coat of dust, through which the metal gleams dimly. When I entered the room the other day it was the first time for nearly a century that a human foot had crossed the threshold. The machine was still on the floor, with the little glass-lined drawer half shut in. I might not touch it, but I hazarded a guess that it was used for combining substances, for which great accuracy, both of time and proportion, was necessary. I thought, too, that I detected some charred fragments of paper amongst the dust on the table, but of this I cannot be certain. But I did find, hidden beneath a thick coating of dust, some notes of this last fatal experiment, and the stump of a quill pen, much gnawed, with which they were made.

G. S. ELLAM.



A POET'S PLACE.

MID the green old woods of England
 There stands a princely hall,
 Where sunbeams pass through painted glass
 On oaken floors to fall,
 And pictured dame and knight of fame
 Watch from its carven wall.

And there, three hundred years ago,
 A poet found a place,
 Made free to roam that noble home
 By its proud owner's grace,
 And at a while, to catch a smile
 From its sweet lady's face.

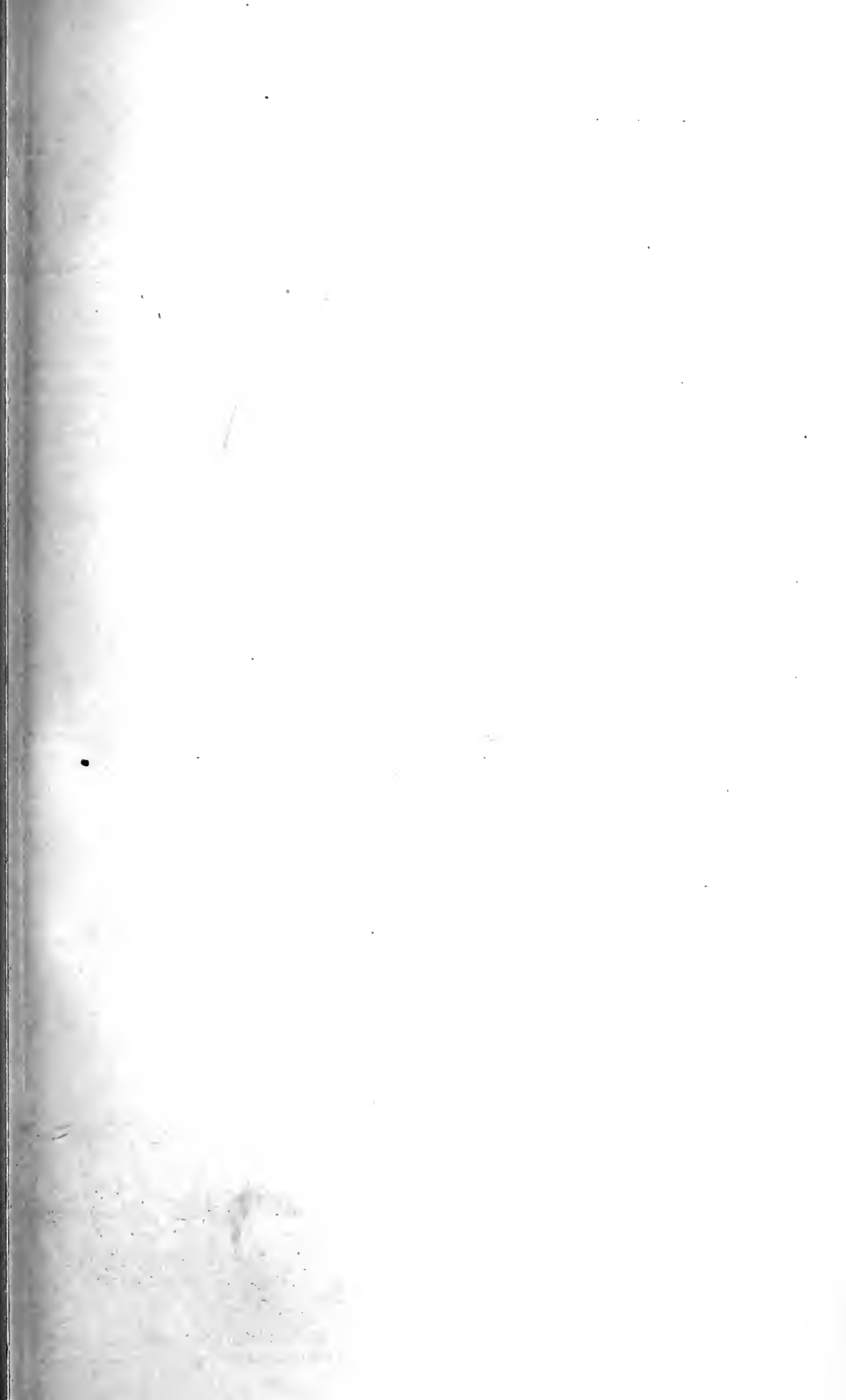
'Twas not for him—the festal throng
 Where wit and beauty beam :
 Nor yet debate on nations' fate,
 Nor field where rapiers gleam.
 He made no moan—he sat alone
 As if he did but dream !

It was three hundred years ago—
 The hall still stands to-day,
 And still there pass, through painted glass,
 The sunbeams at their play.
 Though fair and brave, and statesmen grave,
 Have faded from the way.

'Tis rather he, whom haughty hands
 Did lowly refuge spare,
 Who saves for Fame the old hall's name,
 And theirs who feasted there.
 For songs he sung with golden tongue
 Still echo in its air !

A poet's dream as nought may seem
 To careless passers by :
 A poet's heart must beat apart,
 (Because it beats so high !)
 But noble song Time cannot wrong,
 Nor true thoughts ever die !

ISABELLA FVIE MAYO.





THE ARGOSY.

DECEMBER, 1889.

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH.

BY DARLEY DALE, AUTHOR OF "FAIR KATHERINE."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MRS. CANTER IS INSPIRED.

IT will be remembered that our friend Mrs. Canter took charge of the Archdeacon in his fainting fit, and, when he was sufficiently recovered, drove back to the Rectory with him. She then sent for the doctor, put the Archdeacon to bed and installed herself as his nurse, with a mental resolution to the effect that she did not leave his bedside till Miss Vera returned. As she sat watching him, she racked her brains in trying to think where the diamonds could be.

"They are not at the bank," she thought, "for Mr. Tempest told me he had sent to inquire. Lawyer Jones has not them either, for madam is too cunning to trust such a slippery fellow with them: he would make off with them before she had time to turn round, as sure as that postman Lane is the biggest fool in the country. No, they are in this house, I am certain. I felt I was burning, as the children say when they play hide-and-seek, directly I came into the house. Well, if Madam Jamieson-Tempest chooses to play that game with me I am sorry for her, for I mean to win; she has hidden; I'll seek as sure as I am a widow, and I'll find as sure as I am a laundress. I shall have plenty of time to seek, for I don't mean to leave this house till Miss Vera is in it, and I shall find plenty of opportunities when everyone else is asleep. I know the keys of every door and drawer in the house; so if the diamonds are to be found, trust me to find them."

When she reached this stage in her thoughts Mrs. Canter rose and looked at her patient, which turned their current into a new channel.

"I don't like the look of you at all, sir; that I don't. I never like to see sick people pull at the counterpane like that; it is a certain sign of death; and as for your poor heart, Mr. Tempest, it flutters like a frightened bird. If I could only find those blessed diamonds

I'd telegraph to Miss Vera to come home, that I would ; and if she were to come back on the wires I don't know that she'd be here too soon. Anyhow, I'll write to her and get Captain Raleigh to post the letter. I have known her address all along as well as if I had been told ; leastwise I knew if I sent the letter to Father Ambrose it would find her."

Accordingly Mrs. Canter spent the remainder of the morning, until the two captains returned, in writing to Vera ; but on hearing how badly the case was going, she hesitated to send the letter on her own responsibility, until she knew the decision of the Court. But she was more determined than ever to find the diamonds when she heard that Mr. Jones's speech had done more harm to Vera than Freeman's evidence had done to Mark. Hers was not a nature to be crushed by any trouble ; on the contrary, the deeper the water the better she floated. So far from feeling inclined to sink after her interview with the two captains, her buoyant spirits rose to the occasion.

Had she been a good Catholic, she would, under existing circumstances, have invoked the aid of St. Anthony, who is wont to reward his clients by finding their lost things. But Mrs. Canter was not much given to prayer of any kind ; she was eminently a Martha rather than a Mary ; neither was she given to ask help of anyone ; least of all the saints, for she was much too thorough a Protestant to believe for one moment that they could hear her prayers. So she did not have recourse to St. Anthony. She did, however, ejaculate, as she ascended the stairs after Captain Raleigh and his friend had left ; but that ejaculation was certainly not a prayer, neither was it apparent to whom it was addressed, for it was merely this: "Drat the diamonds !" drat being a favourite word of Mrs. Canter's. It expressed pretty much the same as another little word of four letters, but it had this advantage over that other word—it was not naughty ; vulgar it might be, inelegant it certainly was, but it was not wicked and it was expressive.

Having thus relieved her feelings, Mrs. Canter proceeded upstairs, but instead of going on to the dressing-room where the Archdeacon lay in bed, she paused at Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's bedroom, and, opening the door, walked in and looked quickly round. Suddenly her eyes rested on a large mahogany wardrobe which had stood in the same place in the first Mrs. Tempest's time, and it was then that the inspiration above alluded to came to her.

The sight of the wardrobe recalled to Mrs. Canter's memory a scene which occurred fully fifteen years ago, when, Mr. Ryot-Tempest having invested in a rod for the correction of his son, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest persuaded Norah to get hold of it and hide it, under her direction, in a secret drawer in the wardrobe. Memory recalled to her recollection the existence of the secret drawer ; suspicion suggested the diamonds were hidden somewhere ; shrewdness said, by their owner ; genius whispered, in the secret drawer ; and the next

moment Mrs. Canter was as certain the whisper was true as if she saw the diamonds lying there. A flash of something, call it what you will—light, inspiration, intelligence : a flash revealed to her the secret of the jewels ; of this she felt convinced ; but with the revelation came a feeling of intense anger at her own stupidity in not having thought of this place before.

“ Well, if anyone had told me I could have been so stupid as not to think of that drawer before, I would not have believed them ; I could not have made a bigger fool of myself if I had tried, unless I had married Lane. However, better late than never ; I may be in time yet ; I will send Mary with a message to Mr. Deedes to say I have found them.”

And, acting at once upon this idea, she sent that letter to Mr. Deedes which made him change his policy. This done, she looked at the Archdeacon, told him everything was going on well, and she expected the others would soon be home from the Court ; and then she went back to Mrs. Ryot-Tempest’s room to examine her wardrobe, for the drawer fastened with a spring and required no key. To her exceeding wrath, however, the wardrobe was locked, and nowhere could she find the key, though she took the liberty of searching the room very thoroughly for it.

“ They are in there sure enough, I’ll be bound, or why should she lock up her wardrobe ? As soon as Mr. Deedes comes in, we’ll have them out ; and once they are found, I’ll telegraph to Miss Vera to come home to her father before he dies,” said Mrs. Canter to herself, as she took the precaution of locking the bedroom door and putting the key in her pocket, to prevent Mrs. Ryot-Tempest from entering the room until Mr. Deedes had done so.

In due time Mrs. Ryot-Tempest and Holmes returned from the Court, arriving before any of the others ; for Mr. Deedes had several matters to attend to before he could get away, and the two gentlemen preferred walking to driving with their hostess. Mary met her mistress in the hall by Mrs. Canter’s orders, most willingly obeyed, and said the doctor had given strict orders that the house was to be kept perfectly quiet, and the Archdeacon on no account to see anyone that day but Mrs. Canter, as if he had another fainting fit—and the least excitement might produce one—the doctor would not answer for the consequences.

“ Where is your master ? ” demanded Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

“ In bed in his dressing-room, ma’am.”

“ Very well. I shall go and lie down on the sofa in my room, Holmes. Bring me some tea as quickly as you can.”

“ I beg your pardon, ma’am,” interrupted Mary ; “ but would you mind going into Miss Vera’s sitting-room ? Your room is locked.”

“ My room locked ! By whom, pray ? ” demanded Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in an anxious tone.

“ By Mrs. Canter, ma’am. She has the key.”

"Indeed! Well, I have met with many impertinent things in the course of my life, but never with anything to equal this," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, in a suppressed rage.

She reached the landing white with anger, meaning to rattle the handle of her door till Mrs. Canter came and unlocked it; but in this she was disappointed; for in front of the door stood Mrs. Canter, vested in a large white muslin apron of Mary's, the bib of which covered but a very small portion of her mighty chest; her large, soft, crinkled red hands were folded in front of her, resting where her waist ought to have been, but she scorned anything so feminine as a waist; an imposing cap crowned her black hair; a triumphant smile played about her lips; an unusually suave manner warned Mrs. Ryot-Tempest that the battle was to be fierce between them.

"Unlock that door this moment, you insolent woman, or I will have you removed by main force," she said, in a low, clear, distinct voice, which nevertheless betrayed the intense anger she was feeling.

"No, ma'am, you won't do anything of the kind; for there is not a servant in the house who would venture to lay so much as his little finger on me; and I don't mean to open the door till Mr. Deedes comes."

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest paused to consider her next move. Clearly to attempt to displace this gigantic woman would be as undignified as it would be hopeless. Mrs. Canter was stronger than most men; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, though as tall as her adversary, was slight and possessed of no great physical strength. A personal encounter was therefore out of the question; it was equally certain none of the servants would venture to attempt to remove her. So physical force could not be employed. And as for Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's impressive manner, which would have cowed a less brave spirit, it had simply no effect on Mrs. Canter beyond adding to her intense enjoyment of the scene.

But Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was also a woman of resources. There yet remained another weapon: she would threaten to disturb the Archdeacon; that threat would no doubt prevail.

"Unless you unlock that door this moment, I shall be obliged to disturb the Archdeacon, and request him, ill as he is, to interfere," she said.

"That will bring her to her senses," she thought. But not a bit of it; Mrs. Canter had foreseen this move and was quite prepared to meet it.

"No, ma'am, you won't go near the master if I know it. Mr. Tempest's life depends on his being kept perfectly quiet; to disturb him would be murder; and if you attempt to do it, I'll stop you, if I have to carry you downstairs," said Mrs. Canter, forgetting her stops as even she had never done before.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest saw she was in earnest, and believing her to be quite capable of carrying out her threat she resolved to beat a retreat ; but curiosity prompted her before leaving the field to demand some explanation of this extraordinary conduct.

"You must be mad ; and as I have no desire to come in contact with a maniac, my only course is to humour your freak," she said with dignity.

"There is method in my madness, at any rate," interrupted Mrs. Canter.

"What has possessed you to do this ? No sane person would act in such a manner."

"Indeed ! Well, I am sane enough to know the diamonds are in that room, and wise enough to prevent you from going in until Mr. Deedes has seen them."

And if Mrs. Canter had wanted anything to confirm her suspicion, the look of utter defeat on Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's face as she turned and went into an adjoining room was enough.

"What was all that talking outside my room, Norah ?" asked the Archdeacon when Mrs. Canter resumed her character of nurse, after this pleasing little interlude, during which she had played the part of a special constable.

"It was Mrs. Ryot-Tempest inquiring for you, sir," said Mrs. Canter, who was of opinion that nurses should not stick at the truth, if the truth were likely to be detrimental to their patients.

"Don't let her in, Norah ; please don't let her in. Stay with me," said the Archdeacon feebly ; and the request and the tone in which it was made told plainly enough how great was his dread of this woman whom he had made his wife.

"No fear, sir," said Mrs. Canter, pitying her master from the bottom of her large heart ; for though in his health she had despised him for making this second marriage, his present helplessness appealed to her womanly sympathy, and she pitied far more than she blamed him.

Just then there was a tap at the door, and when she opened it Mary whispered to her that Mr. Deedes had come, and wanted to see her immediately, and that Reuben was in the kitchen.

"Send Reuben up here and tell Mr. Deedes I'll be with him directly," said Mrs. Canter, and then returning to the Archdeacon she said :

"I must leave you for a little while, sir, to speak to Mr. Deedes."

"See that no one comes in, then, Norah. Be very careful I am not disturbed, and be as quick as you can."

"I'll take care of that, sir. Try and get a nap while I am gone ; sleep will do you more good than anything."

On leaving the room, Mrs. Canter found Reuben outside, wondering greatly what he was wanted for. He was soon enlightened.

"Reuben, the master is in there, about as strong as a new-born babe; stand by the door till I come back and don't let anyone in; least of all madam, for it is as much as his life is worth; if he rings, call me. I have found the diamonds!" And without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Canter ran downstairs, while Reuben nodded silently and took up a position with his back to the door like a sentinel on duty.

In the Archdeacon's study, which Mrs. Canter now entered, were the lawyer and the two captains eagerly awaiting her arrival.

"Well, Mrs. Canter, and where are the diamonds?" said Mr. Deedes as she entered.

"In Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's wardrobe, sir."

"Have you them safely?"

"They are safe enough, because they are locked up, sir; we must either force the lock or get the key from madam, who has it."

"But if they are locked up how can you have seen them?" struck in Captain Tempest.

"I have not seen them, sir," said Mrs. Canter, placidly.

"Then after all you are not certain they are there?" said Mr. Deedes in a tone of great annoyance.

"I am as certain as I am a living woman; but I hope, gentlemen, you won't waste my time talking, for I can't be in two places at once and I can't leave the Archdeacon for long," said Mrs. Canter in a tone of reproof.

"Well, we had better ask Mrs. Ryot-Tempest for the key," said Mr. Deedes, who knew Mrs. Canter was not a person to be trifled with; and though by no means sure she had found the diamonds, he was too anxious to recover them to leave a stone unturned to find them.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was in Vera's sitting-room when Mr. Deedes begged an audience; she had had time to recover from her recent defeat and had gathered together her forces and decided on a new plan of action, so Mr. Deedes found his errand much easier than he had anticipated.

"I know what you have come for: that insolent woman has told you some cock-and-bull story about my diamonds, and you want to search my room for them," she said, without any sign of annoyance.

Mr. Deedes bowed gravely, for he hated the woman and scarcely knew how to be civil to her.

"I have not the slightest objection; on the contrary, as I am naturally more anxious than anyone else that the diamonds should be found, I will do all in my power to help you; but I must tell you I have searched every nook and corner in my room over and over again unsuccessfully," continued Mrs. Ryot-Tempest amiably.

"What an arrant humbug she is," thought Mr. Deedes as he followed her to her room, at the door of which stood Mrs. Canter.

"Is it necessary that this woman should be present?" asked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"You won't find the diamonds without me, Mr. Deedes, so I warn you," interrupted Mrs. Canter in a stage aside, overheard by Reuben from his post as sentinel.

It was characteristic of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who could not fail to see the blacksmith as she passed close by him, and indeed knew perfectly well why he was standing outside the Archdeacon's room, that she took not the slightest notice of him, acting on the principle that "what can't be cured must be endured."

"I must have some witness; Mrs. Canter will do as well as anyone else," said Mr. Deedes; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest made no further objection.

The search now began by Mrs. Ryot-Tempest opening all the drawers in her toilet-table, much to Mrs. Canter's annoyance, for she knew perfectly well the diamonds were not there and she was anxious to get back to her patient as soon as possible. She was nevertheless obliged to control her impatience while Mrs. Ryot-Tempest slowly and deliberately opened every drawer and turned it out for Mr. Deedes to inspect; common courtesy forcing him to submit, though he was as excited and impatient as Mrs. Canter.

At last the toilet-table drawers were finished and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest now turned to her dressing-case; whereupon Mrs. Canter could not resist saying: "The diamonds are not there, madam; they are in your wardrobe."

"We will look there next, please," said Mr. Deedes.

"As you will; it is a perfect farce searching this room at all," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, opening first one wing and then the other of the wardrobe.

The wings were hanging cupboards, and most unlikely places to hide the diamonds in, and needless to say they were not found there. The centre of the wardrobe contained five long drawers and two short ones; the two short ones were at the top, but Mrs. Ryot-Tempest chose to begin at the bottom and work her way up, leaving the very drawer Mrs. Canter wanted her to open first to the last. Six drawers were opened and examined without any sign of the diamonds, a process which lasted nearly half an hour; and Mrs. Canter, between her excitement about the diamonds and her anxiety about the Archdeacon, grew so hot that she stood alternately wiping her face and fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief. Mr. Deedes began to get cross, and thought Mrs. Canter was making a grievous mistake; and when, at last, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest opened the left-hand drawer, he said sharply:

"Now, Mrs. Canter, if the diamonds are not here, you will have to answer for all the trouble you have given us."

The diamonds were not there, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was about to close this last drawer with an air of triumph, when Mrs. Canter

stepped forward and laid her large red hand on the open drawer. "Excuse me, ma'am. Mr. Deedes, be so kind as to look here, please ; you see these two drawers don't fill up the whole width of the wardrobe, there is a space of three or four inches between them."

"I see," said Mr. Deedes.

"There is a secret drawer between," continued Mrs. Canter.

"Nonsense, woman ! I must have found it out if there had been," said Mrs. Tempest, endeavouring to close the drawer.

"You have found it out, ma'am ; to some purpose too—the diamonds are in that secret chamber ; if you'll have the kindness to move, I'll open it," said Mrs. Canter.

"Insolent creature !" muttered Mrs. Ryot-Tempest as she moved aside.

Mrs. Canter now put her hand into the drawer, touched a spring, which sent a sliding-board at the right side of the drawer up into the cornice of the wardrobe and disclosed a small partition, in which, pillowed on cotton-wool, lay the glittering diamonds blazing with light.

"I knew they were there—trumpery things ! Now what do you think of that, Mr. Deedes ? I only wish I had the punishing of you, ma'am ; but Heaven will take you in hand one of these fine days, and I hope you'll get your deserts," said Mrs. Canter as she threw the scintillating diamonds in a heap on the bed, and then left the room before Mr. Deedes had found words in which to express his delight.

"Impertinent woman ! but I must forgive her for finding my precious diamonds again. I am delighted ! How could they have got there ?" exclaimed the owner of the diamonds.

"Madam, I would rather not reply to that question," said Mr. Deedes, coldly.

"Of course," continued Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in a conciliatory tone, "this completely exonerates dear Vera from all suspicion ; but the mystery is still unexplained. Stay ! I have it. I wonder it did not occur to me before. The Archdeacon must have hid them here and in his dear absent way forgot all about it. No doubt he hid them when I refused to send them to the bank. Poor dear man, no wonder he forgot when Vera so foolishly ran away from home. However, we must have her back at once. Let us go down to her uncle and Captain Raleigh and tell them the good news, Mr. Deedes."

Mr. Deedes was amazed at her calmness, and the clever way in which she managed to escape so gracefully from such an exceedingly unpleasant position. That she and no one else had hidden the diamonds he was as certain as Mrs. Canter herself, and she knew this as well as he did. Yet she stood there smiling and apparently as innocent as Vera herself.

"The woman has missed her vocation ; she is a born actress," he thought as he silently followed her downstairs, with a case in which she had placed the diamonds in her hands.

She led the way to the study, where Arthur Raleigh and Captain Tempest were awaiting the result of the search in the greatest impatience.

"Such good news for you both! My beautiful diamonds are found! Look, here they are! They were in a secret drawer known to no one in the house but the Archdeacon and Mrs. Canter. Poor dear Archdeacon! he is so ill we must forgive him for all the anxiety his absence of mind has caused us," exclaimed Mrs. Ryot-Tempest in her sweetest tones, as she advanced to the two gentlemen.

"The Archdeacon? What had the Archdeacon to do with it?" interrupted Captain Tempest.

"Why he is the culprit who hid them, of course. No wonder he forgot where, in all the trouble we have been through since the night of the burglary," replied Mrs. Ryot-Tempest sweetly.

"Whew—w—w," whistled Captain Tempest, sotto voce, raising his eyebrows at Raleigh.

"Mr. Deedes, you had better take charge of these tiresome jewels, which have caused so much trouble to us all, and I must go and write to dear Vera and apologise for having ever suspected her. And Captain Raleigh, I hope for the sake of 'auld lang syne' you will forgive me too, and ask Vera to do the same," she added in an undertone to Raleigh as she looked into his eyes.

"Madam, I have nothing to forgive; and Vera will, I am sure, act rightly without any advice from me," replied Captain Raleigh haughtily; and the glance of cool contempt in his blue eyes told Mrs. Ryot-Tempest her influence over him had long ago passed away.

She turned a shade paler and bit her lip with vexation, for she knew neither Raleigh nor Captain Tempest any more believed that the Archdeacon had hidden the diamonds than Mrs. Canter did; but her best policy was to appear ignorant of this fact.

"Mr. Deedes, this has quite convinced me that I have been terribly deceived in Mark Brown; I feel certain now he was in league with Freeman, and but for my dear husband's foresight in hiding the diamonds I should probably never have seen them again after that Tuesday night."

"I am glad to hear it, madam; you had better communicate with your solicitor, who happens also to be the prisoner's, to that effect before the case is resumed next Tuesday," said Mr. Deedes, stiffly; but in his heart he was secretly admiring Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's cleverness exceedingly.

She was undoubtedly a clever woman. Not the least bit intellectual, but clever with that cleverness which is much more useful to a woman than intellect. She had by her jealousy placed herself in a most awkward position; ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have failed to extricate themselves from such a dilemma, but she escaped most gracefully with a smiling countenance.

"I will go and write to Mr. Jones and to Vera, then," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, swimming in her own peculiar way to the door, where she met Mrs. Canter.

"There is no use in writing to Miss Vera: I have telegraphed to her to come home at once; but she won't be here in time to see her poor father—care has killed him!" said Mrs. Canter, who had arrived in time to hear this last remark.

CHAPTER XXXV.

JOY THAT KILLS.

MRS. CANTER was a firm believer in the destructive powers of care; so when she returned to the Archdeacon after the discovery of the diamonds, and found he refused to be kept in ignorance of what was going on but insisted that his brother should go and tell him all about the trial, she went into the study and thus delivered herself:

"Well, gentlemen, I don't know what is to be done, I am sure. Mr. Tempest will know what has happened, so I suppose he must be told; and it will kill him as sure as I am a living woman: 'care killed the cat,' and he has had care enough to kill him already; when he hears where those diamonds are found it will be the death of him. All I know is, I won't be the bearer of the news; and the doctor said no one else was to see him."

"I will tell him; the doctor cannot mean to exclude me from my husband's room," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"If he didn't, the master does; he has told me on no account to let you go into his room, ma'am, and I don't mean to either," interrupted Mrs. Canter.

"Poor dear Archdeacon, how ill he is! Well, sick people often refuse to see the person they love best, so I must give in to him, though I should like to have been the bearer of the good news. I hope it won't do him any harm, but it will be such joy to know the diamonds are found, and 'it is joy that kills,'" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

Mrs. Canter gave an indignant snort, and muttered audibly: "Joy indeed! precious little joy he has had lately or is likely to have," and then she turned to Captain Tempest and said:

"He wishes to see you, sir, and declares he will get up and come downstairs if you don't go to him."

"Then in that case I had better go at once, and tell him as little as I can. Eh, Raleigh?" said Captain Tempest.

"Yes; I imagine to excite himself as he appears to be doing is the very worst thing for him. Perhaps when he hears we have telegraphed for Vera to come home that will calm him," said Raleigh, who naturally thought Vera a panacea for every ill.

"I'll do my best; but if he has made up his mind to hear everything, he'll hear it," said Captain Tempest as he left the study.

He was shocked to see how frail and fragile the Archdeacon looked when he entered his room ; a puff of wind would soon blow out the little life there is in him, and as for the news he had to tell him, why it would come upon him like a hurricane, he thought, as he took a seat by his brother's side. "Ryot, I am afraid you are not strong enough for much talking ; won't you try and sleep ? and then when you wake you will be better able to hear the news."

"Is it bad news, then ?" exclaimed the Archdeacon anxiously.

"On the contrary, it is good news ; but I doubt the wisdom of telling you what it is in your present state," replied the Captain.

"I wish to hear it ; I am dying, George, and I have no wish to live ; but before I go I should like to know if there is a chance of Vera being cleared from this foul suspicion."

"There is every chance of that : the case is remanded for a week, and Deedes feels confident the diamonds will be found before then ; so confident that we have telegraphed for Vera to come home," said Captain Tempest, trying to break the news gently to his brother.

"She shall not do so then. Do you hear me, George ? Let another telegram go to say I forbid it. She shall never enter England again until all the world knows she is innocent," said the Archdeacon in broken sentences, for the excitement with which he spoke gave him violent palpitation of the heart.

"Ryot, my dear fellow, calm yourself ; I promise you Vera shall not enter England till the diamonds are found ; on my word of honour she shall not," said Captain Tempest, laying his hand on his brother's heart, and fearing each double-knock it gave would be the last.

Perhaps something in Captain Tempest's tone revealed the fact that the diamonds were already found ; perhaps that clearness of vision which often comes to those on the brink of the grave enabled him to guess the truth ; at any rate he guessed it. "They are found," he exclaimed, raising himself in the bed.

"Ryot ! this is simply suicidal ; lie still, or I will not speak another word to you. Yes, thank God, the confounded things are found. And now, for goodness' sake lie still and calm yourself ; your heart can't beat regularly when you are so excited ; you don't give the poor thing a chance of righting itself," said Captain Tempest as he placed the Archdeacon back on his pillows.

For a few minutes the Archdeacon had such difficulty in breathing that he could not attempt to speak, but he had no sooner recovered his breath than he demanded :

"Where ?"

"Norah found them, and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who is now quite convinced of Vera's innocence and is writing to apologise to her, thinks you must have hidden them and forgotten you had done so," said Captain Tempest, hoping the Archdeacon would ask no further questions ; for, he thought, to hear of his wife's treachery, unless he suspected it, would be the last straw.

"I hid them? I did not. I thought Freeman stole them," gasped the sick man.

"My dear brother, if you will take my advice you will ask no more questions about the diamonds; they were not stolen; I wish with all my heart they had been. They are found; all England will, I suppose, know where next Tuesday; and it would be very much better for everyone if Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's theory, that you hid them lest they should be stolen and then forgot you had done so, were accepted. I have told you all there is to tell now, so try and go to sleep and let me send Norah to you."

But if Captain Tempest hoped by this means to prevent his brother from asking any more questions he was mistaken; a terrible suspicion that the woman he had made his wife had hidden the diamonds in order to cast suspicion on Vera seized hold of him; and though he dreaded lest that suspicion should be confirmed, still he felt compelled to know the truth even if the truth killed him.

"Tell me the truth, George, the whole truth. Where were the diamonds found?" he asked, laying one of his thin hands on his brother's and gazing anxiously into his face.

Captain Tempest felt in despair; he dared not refuse to answer lest the Archdeacon should again attempt to rise, and he feared the effect the truth would have upon him. Nevertheless, he thought it would excite him less to answer than to refuse to do so, and there was the chance he might not suspect his wife had hidden them. So he answered:

"In the secret drawer in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's wardrobe."

A sigh, a gasp, and the Archdeacon's hand dropped lifeless on to the bed, his eyes closed, his breathing apparently ceased, and when Captain Tempest, after ringing the bell violently, placed his hand on his heart he could detect no movement. In less than a minute Mrs. Canter entered the room, followed closely by Captain Raleigh and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, for the violence with which the bell had been pulled alarmed the whole house. Mr. Deedes came to the door, and the frightened servants crowded noiselessly on the landing.

"He is gone, Norah, I believe," whispered Captain Tempest.

"No wonder; care has killed him. Send for the doctor, sir, and order two mustard plasters," said Mrs. Canter as she moved a hot bottle which was in the bed to the Archdeacon's feet, and then gently rubbed his heart with brandy-and-water to stimulate its action.

"Poor dear Ryot! joy has killed him," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, bending over her husband to kiss him from the opposite side of the bed.

"No, ma'am, he is not dead yet. I hope you won't die of joy in this room, though, because there would not be a chance for the Archdeacon if he revives then," said Mrs. Canter with almost brutal sarcasm as she placed one of the mustard plasters, now brought by Mary, on to the Archdeacon's left side.

"Is there any hope, do you think?" said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, turning to her brother-in-law and ignoring Mrs. Canter entirely.

"Very little, I fear; he fell back when he heard where the diamonds were found," replied Captain Tempest.

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest turned pale, her lip quivered, a sob rose in her chest, tears gathered in her eyes, and Captain Tempest almost pitied her, for he knew she was suffering, and he could not bear to see a woman suffer, even though she deserved to. But the tears were forced back, the quivering lip was bitten, the sob was turned into a cough; and whispering:

"Poor Archdeacon! Self-reproach at his forgetfulness, no doubt," she left the bed-side.

"What an actress she would have made," thought Captain Tempest, and his pity was changed to admiration, for which he inwardly scorned himself at the same time that he paid her this tribute.

"He is reviving; leave him with me and Captain Tempest till the doctor comes, if you please, ma'am," said Mrs. Canter in a loud whisper; and Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, fearing that her presence might have a bad effect on the Archdeacon if she remained when he recovered consciousness, swept gracefully from the room.

"You can go back to your work; your master is recovering from a fainting fit," she said to the servants on the stairs as she passed them to go to her own room.

She was not all bad, this graceful, handsome, selfish woman of the world. Like most people, she was a mixture of good and bad, for good and bad in ever varying proportions are component parts of the human race. She had her good points: she really loved her husband in her way; that is, she loved herself infinitely better; but still she did love him and she was afraid he was very ill; she did not believe he was dying, but she thought him ill enough to make her feel very anxious. She would have liked to have been able to go to him whenever she felt inclined to do so. To nurse him was far from her thoughts; her own health could not stand that; and to get up at night would have been folly; broken rest works such terrible havoc on a woman's face—its wages are wrinkles and heavy eyelids; what man is worth such a sacrifice? The Archdeacon certainly was not. But she would have liked to go into his room now and then if his anger with her had not rendered this impossible, not to mention the presence of that most objectionable, insolent woman, Mrs. Canter.

She had behaved treacherously to Vera; there was no denying it. A fit of jealousy had led her on, abetted by circumstances, from one thing to another till she was really horrified to find how far astray she had been led. Her treachery had been utterly useless also, for Captain Raleigh evidently had no eyes for anyone but Vera. It had failed signally to sow discord between these two lovers. On the other hand it had almost, if not quite, killed the Archdeacon, and it had

made her obnoxious to everyone in the house ; for she knew that, in spite of her fine acting, everyone believed she had hidden the diamonds.

And as she sat down in the privacy of her own room to ponder over all that had happened, she confessed to herself she had made a mistake in hiding the diamonds. She was sorry, exceedingly sorry she had done so, and yet she could hardly be said to be penitent, for real penitence consists in resolving to sin no more ; whereas if by hiding the diamonds she could separate Vera and Captain Raleigh she would do it again. Her sorrow was because she had failed to accomplish her object, and had made herself unpopular and lost her husband's affection for nothing. Not even to herself would she acknowledge that her conduct had had any bad effect on the Archdeacon's health. Vera's obstinacy in persisting to marry Captain Raleigh, her foolishness in running away from home and the consequent anxiety she had caused her father, were, in Mrs. Ryot-Tempest's opinion, the real causes of his illness, and if he died she would attribute his death, inwardly to Vera's conduct and outwardly to the joy which kills.

While Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was thus blaming Vera for her own misdeeds, Vera : who had just received the telegram telling her the diamonds were found and that her father was seriously ill and wished her to come home at once : Vera was reproaching herself most bitterly for having left him. She had been selfish and self-willed to run away from her home, for now that she was no longer suspected it was easy enough to look back and think. The reasons which had driven her to take refuge at Avranches were not sufficient to justify her in taking such a step ; and so she blamed herself even more than her step-mother blamed her.

It was found impossible to catch the Southampton steamer that night ; so a reply was sent to say Father Ambrose and Vera would cross the following night, Wednesday, and would reach Woodford early on Thursday afternoon.

The Archdeacon had recovered consciousness when this message came, and as he was now all impatience to see Vera, the doctor informed him she could not arrive till Thursday.

"Shall I live till then ? I want to live till then ; I want to see her again before I die ; my pretty Vera—my dear wife's child."

He spoke as if he had but one wife, ignoring the living wife entirely.

"Mr. Archdeacon, your recovery depends almost entirely upon yourself ; if you keep quiet and do not worry or excite yourself there is no reason why you should not live another ten or fifteen years."

"I don't want to recover ; I should like to see my children once again before I die : they are all I have to care for ; and then, please God, to go to my wife, the wife of my youth, the love of my life."

These last words were spoken in so low a tone the doctor could only just catch them, and the tears rolled down the Archdeacon's pale, shrunken cheeks as he spoke.

"Mr. Archdeacon, your son is, I believe, expected to reach England this week ; I can promise you you will live to see him if you will follow my directions ; everything depends on your keeping quiet, and happily there is no reason why you should not do so ; your brother will attend to all this law business for you ; you need do nothing but lie still and rest," said the doctor. But the Archdeacon only shook his head.

The doctor shook his also when he joined Captain Tempest and Arthur Raleigh downstairs.

"I can't promise you that he will live till Vera returns ; and anyhow the excitement of seeing her will probably be too much for him ; his heart is so weak he may go off at any moment," was his report.

It was decided Captain Raleigh should leave Woodford by the night mail on Wednesday, and meet Vera and Father Ambrose at Southampton on Thursday morning. Accordingly, when the Hâvre boat came in, a pale, languid-looking, handsome man went on board, and, regardless of spectators : who by the way were too much occupied with their own affairs to pay much attention to anyone's else's : clasped a fair girl with golden hair and lustrous dark eyes, dressed in white serge trimmed with white astrachan, in his arms, and whispered, as their lips met, the one word :

"Vera !"

And if joy kills, surely those two should have fallen lifeless on the deck, for their cup of joy was full to overflowing. But joy was merciful, and instead of killing them poured new life into their veins and made them feel that earth was heaven, and they forgot in that embrace the purgatory through which they had passed to reach it.

"Vera, my child, where is your luggage ?" asked Father Ambrose.

His voice recalled the lovers to the fact that they were on the deck of a steamer, as it was meant to do ; for Vera's luggage was only a handbag, which the kind old priest was carrying.

"That is all I have, Father Ambrose. Arthur, how is papa ?" said Vera anxiously.

"Much the same ; very weak, but longing to see you."

"Is there no hope ?"

"Yes, he may recover and live for years ; but he does not wish it, and he may go off at any moment."

"My poor father ! I wish I had not left him," said Vera sadly, as she gave Raleigh her hand to help her across the gangway.

"So do I," said Raleigh gently.

But he was thinking of what he had suffered when he met Vera disguised as a nun, not of the Archdeacon ; and resolved to have his

revenge for that on the first opportunity : a resolution he did not fail to keep.

They breakfasted together as soon as they got ashore and then took the train to London, thinking this quicker and less fatiguing than a long journey across country, for they would be able to lunch in town and catch the three o'clock express from Paddington to Woodford. Accordingly, about a quarter to three that afternoon they reached Paddington, and Captain Raleigh was paying the cabman, when, to his surprise and not altogether to his delight, he heard a shout of "Why, Vera !" in a man's voice, and looking round, saw a young, handsome fellow jump from a hansom-cab which drew up in front of Raleigh's and seize Vera in his arms.

"What shocking form !" thought Captain Raleigh, forgetful of the fact that he had acted in the same way a few hours ago on the crowded deck of a steamer ; but Vera appeased him by turning to him and saying :

"Arthur, it is my brother—it is Rex. Rex, this is Captain Raleigh."

Rex had arrived from New York early that morning, and, like the others, had preferred going through London to taking a cross-country route with its inevitable waiting at uninteresting places, and was now on his way down to Woodford. As may well be imagined, there was so much to talk about that the journey was not too long to post Rex up in all that had happened since he left England ; so that by the time they reached Woodford he knew as much as Vera about the diamonds and their recovery, Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, and his father's illness. He grew very grave when he learnt the Archdeacon's life hung on a thread, for conscience whispered that his own conduct in making a *mésalliance* had probably helped to shorten his father's life, since it had been a terrible blow to his pride ; and he hoped he would arrive in time to see him alive and to hear that he was forgiven. Vera was scarcely less anxious than Rex, and as the train steamed into Woodford the brother and sister took hold of each other's hands and wondered if they were already fatherless.

There was no one to meet them ; but the station-master told them Captain Tempest had sent word down that the only fly the village boasted was to bring them up, and this was in readiness. So Rex and Vera jumped in, leaving Captain Raleigh to see Father Ambrose to the convent. The drive from the station was only about a mile, but it was uphill and the horse walked most of the way, so it seemed to Rex and Vera the longest part of the journey, and they could scarcely control their impatience. At length they turned into the Rectory drive, and as soon as they were in sight of the house Rex looked out to see if the blinds were still up.

"Thank God, he is alive, Vera ; the blinds are all up. We are in time."

The next minute the fly stopped, and Rex helped Vera out. They

hastened into the hall, where they were met by Mrs. Canter, apparently in an excited state, which the unexpected sight of Rex did not tend to subdue.

"Law, Mr. Rex, is it you?" she exclaimed under her breath.

"Yes, Norah; we met in London. How is my father?"

"Very bad, sir."

"Is there no hope, Norah?" said Vera, clinging to Rex.

"No, my dear; he is dying; you are just in time."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ALL THINGS CHANGE BUT MRS. CANTER.

THE Archdeacon had passed a restless night, and on the morning of the day Vera and Rex arrived he was decidedly worse; so much so that the doctor thought it his duty to inform Mrs. Ryot-Tempest that he did not think her husband would live out the day. While the doctor was still in the house a telegram arrived from Rex, saying he had just arrived at Liverpool and might be expected home in the course of the day; but as he was in ignorance of his father's state of health he did not say by what train.

"What is to be done, sir? Is Mr. Tempest to be told Mr. Rex has arrived?" asked Mrs. Canter of the doctor.

"Yes, you may as well tell him. Of course he must see his son if he lives till he comes; and, really, precaution now is of very little if any use."

Apparently the Archdeacon was aware of his own danger, for when his brother told him Rex would arrive in the course of the day he replied:

"I am glad of it; I want to see him before I die. Vera will be here by the five o'clock train; perhaps he will come with her. I have a great deal to do before then."

Captain Tempest thought his brother's mind must be wandering; for he could not imagine what the Archdeacon, in his weak state, could possibly propose doing.

"My dear Ryot, the best thing you can possibly do is to be still and rest, and husband all your strength for your children's arrival, which will fatigue you."

"I have only a few hours left to work in. I have eternity to rest in, so I mean to do what I have to do. And first I wish a letter sent to Gordon, the Rector of the next parish, to ask him to come and see me this morning; and before he arrives I wish to see my wife. I am going to make my peace with God and with her before I die. Will you ask her to come to me?"

Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was alone when Captain Tempest gave her this message. The doctor had just told her the end was not very far off, and she was wondering how she could oust Mrs. Canter from the sick-

room and take her place by her husband's side, when the summons came.

For once in her life she felt awkward and abashed as she entered the Archdeacon's room. She had sinned against him and his motherless girl shamefully; he had been justly angry with her, and if he had sent for her to curse her she could hardly call it unjust. But the Archdeacon was a Christian gentleman, and the Book which lay open on his bed had taught him better than that, though he might not have studied it so much as his Peerage and his Lemprière, now laid aside for ever.

She was struck by the change in his appearance since she saw him on Tuesday. She saw at a glance death had laid hold of him. His hours were numbered, and she felt she had shortened their number. As she approached the bedside, the Archdeacon stretched out his hand towards her, and this action touched her more than anything he could have said would have done; for she felt he was offering her forgiveness, and her better nature triumphed. She fell on her knees by his side and whispered:

"Forgive me, Ryot," and the Archdeacon knew this was tantamount to a confession of her sin. He laid his thin white hand with its swollen veins on her bowed head, and said in a low voice:

"God bless you, Poppy."

No more was said on either side; but he knew she had tacitly admitted her treachery, and she knew he forgave her; and the Archdeacon felt the greater part of his day's work was done. It was, perhaps, the best day's work he ever did in his life. It certainly was not an easy task to forgive such an injury to himself and Vera, but he had accomplished it.

After this Mrs. Ryot-Tempest took Mrs. Canter's place by the Archdeacon's desire, and remained in the room the greater part of the day. She was with him when the fly drove up with Vera and Rex. He heard the wheels, and turning to her, said gently:

"These are my children: let me see them alone, please. Vera first."

And when these interviews were over, the Archdeacon felt his work was completed. He had forgiven his son for his clandestine marriage, and he had acknowledged to his daughter he had not been as good a father as he might have been to her; and then, when the sun went down, he went to his rest with his children by his side and their mother's name upon his lips. So died Archdeacon Tempest, a fairly average specimen of a clergyman of the Established Church, such as may be met in many an English parsonage.

"Vera," said Rex that evening, when Captain Raleigh and Father Ambrose had gone to the convent to sleep, "did my father say anything to you about the diamonds?"

"Yes; he said he had forgiven Mrs. Tempest for suspecting me of stealing them, and he hoped I would do the same."

"Was that all he said?"

"No; he said he could not remember hiding the diamonds in the secret drawer; but he had been very ill, and as they were found he wished the case against Mark Brown to be stopped if possible."

"He told me the same. You know, Vera, he never hid those diamonds; that was our step-mother's work. But I see what it is; he wanted to screen her; and so for his sake, not for hers, I think we had better follow suit, and pretend we believe her story," said Rex.

"Very well, dear, let us do so; and what about Mark?"

"Oh! I'll see Deedes about that to-morrow, and ask what can be done. But Uncle George says the case must go on, though perhaps the magistrates may be induced to deal with it themselves instead of sending it for trial."

"All I hope is, I shan't have to give evidence."

"You shan't do that; the case must be adjourned till after the funeral, and before it comes on again you and I will be in Norwich. Raleigh has invited us to go and stay with his mother, and I have accepted."

"Oh! thank you, Rex. But what about Mrs. Ryot-Tempest? Is it right of us to leave her here alone?"

"She is going back to the Grange immediately after the funeral. She told Uncle George she could not remain here; it would remind her of her loss every hour of the day. But, Vera, you look worn out; let us go to bed."

The next morning Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was agreeably surprised to find Rex and Vera were apparently ignorant of her conduct in hiding the diamonds, and since Mrs. Canter had left the Rectory the previous evening she hoped they would not discover it. She owed their ignorance of it to their father's consideration for her, and this fact deepened her regret for the Archdeacon, which to do her justice was sincere; though if Mrs. Canter were to be believed it was not likely to be lasting.

That excellent woman slept at Reuben's cottage the night after her master died, preferring to leave the Rectory on her own account to running the risk of being dismissed by Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"Mr. Tempest is gone, Reuben. Poor gentleman, he went off very quietly," said she, on entering. "And, Reuben, Master Rex has arrived. He and Miss Vera came together, and he is coming to see you to-morrow evening and bring you a parcel from Janet."

"Mr. Rex arrived! Then where is Janet?" exclaimed the blacksmith.

"With some friends of his in New York, who are looking after her while he is in England; she is very well and very happy."

Reuben made no reply to this, but sat with his head buried in his hands; and now and then Mrs. Canter saw a great tear drop through his outstretched fingers.

"Reuben," she said, suddenly, "I'll tell you what it is: I can't be in two places at once; no mortal woman could; and it seems to me I spend as much of my time here as I do at Marling, so I shall leave at Michaelmas and come back to Woodford. It is lonely for you, now Janet is married, and I am sick of those Marling people and their ways. I don't know how to live in a place where Tuesday is washing-day; turning the week topsy-turvy: it isn't right, and what is more it isn't Christian. I should not wonder if they make Monday Sunday next year; they might as well, for all the work they'll do or let others do on Mondays. However, I have had enough of Marling. There is that fool of a postman, too, never brings me a letter but he makes me an offer of marriage, and no use for me to tell him I am a widow; though I will say that is the fault of widows who marry again. Men would know their place well enough if women only kept in their own. Anyhow my place seems to be Woodford, so I'll take my old cottage again at Michaelmas. Half my time now is spent on the railway, for Miss Vera will have me come over for the funeral next Tuesday, and I suppose I shall be wanted to give evidence again next week if the case goes on."

Mrs. Canter talked on to give Reuben time to recover himself. She was not certain if her plan would meet with his approbation and he did not enlighten her till she was leaving the next morning, when he said:

"I'll look in at your old cottage to-day, Norah; it will want doing up before you come back to it." And Mrs. Canter knew he was pleased.

He was, for as she said his life was very lonely now, and his interview with Rex told him it was much better for everyone that he and Janet should settle in Manitoba, if not for life at least for a very long time to come. So his daughter was practically dead to him, and Mrs. Canter if she lived close to him would certainly cheer his loneliness. The children, too, would be a comfort to him. Mary Jane was growing very like her Aunt Janet; perhaps her mother would spare her to live with him. He thought she would, not so much from his knowledge of his sister as from his faith in the saying: "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb!" And when he made the proposal to Mrs. Canter on the day of the Archdeacon's funeral, she promised to allow Mary Jane to please herself, which Reuben knew was virtually accepting his offer.

The funeral was well attended. Vera and Rex followed their father to the grave; Mrs. Ryot-Tempest was not equal to such an ordeal. According to Mrs. Canter she spent the time in settling who was to be her third husband. At any rate she watched the procession through the venetian blinds of her bed-room and regretted that the ritual to be observed was more according to the Archdeacon's taste than her own: which fact was her real reason for not going to the funeral.

The will was read on the return of the funeral party. The Archdeacon had not much to leave, but the little he had was divided equally between Rex and Vera with the exception of a few pictures which were left to Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who announced her intention of moving into the Grange immediately.

"It was dear Ryot's wish. We should have moved in at once had he been spared, so I should not like to delay it a day longer than I can help, sad and lonely as the move will be," she remarked, looking very handsome in her new widow's mourning.

"There is no need to do so : the living may be filled up at once, so the sooner we all vacate the better. Both Vera and I are going to live abroad for the present, so the bulk of the furniture will be sold," said Rex.

"And what will Vera do ? Will she come with me to the Grange until her marriage ?" asked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

"No. She and Rex are going to Norwich to-morrow for a fortnight, and then she will come to me and be married from my house," said Captain Tempest.

"And what about Mark Brown's trial ; won't Vera be wanted to give evidence ?" asked Mrs. Ryot-Tempest with more anxiety than she cared to show ; for she was dreadfully afraid her conduct should be publicly known.

"The case will come on next Friday, but no more evidence will be taken. I have seen the magistrates and they will deal with the case themselves ; they won't send it for trial," said Mr. Deedes, to the intense relief of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest.

She was still more relieved on Friday when Holmes, whom she sent to hear the case, returned from the Court to tell her it was finished at last. Freeman was discharged, but under police surveillance ; and Mark Brown was sentenced to two years' hard labour for perjury, the severest sentence the magistrates had it in their power to give ; and, as they told him, he might congratulate himself on having got off so easily, for had the case been sent for trial he would have had penal servitude.

"Were the diamonds mentioned, Holmes ?"

"Yes, ma'am, just mentioned. Mr. Deedes said he was glad to say they were found and had not been stolen ; that was all."

"Ah ! your poor master, how ill he was ! No wonder his memory failed him at the last," said Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, drying her eyes gently so as not to make them red, after a fashion she had discovered when her first husband departed.

"No wonder, ma'am," echoed Holmes, but if there was irony in her tone her mistress did not detect it.

"Thank God, that matter is at an end ! But it has aged me even more than the poor Archdeacon's death. I must go abroad for a change after the first three months are over. People will have forgotten all about the diamonds by the time I come back. Poor dear

Ryot! I fear I shall deteriorate now I no longer have a husband to look up to: women ought to live in subjection. I might do worse than I did when I accepted the Archdeacon. He was not a bad husband. We should have been happy enough if it had not been for Vera. Step-children are a mistake, especially step-daughters. But widowhood is a dangerous state; it is so apt to make one selfish. However, I must do my best."

These reflections were made as Mrs. Ryot-Tempest made a careful inspection of the lines on her face in her looking-glass. Whether her best was to get another husband or to avoid being selfish did not appear. And if she added a secret rider to the effect that her next husband should have no such encumbrances as step-daughters, we will respect her confidence. She will marry again some day, and so fulfil the remainder of Mrs. Canter's prophecy; but as for the step-daughters, she must take her chance. After all, they might relieve the monotony of married life. It is a poor salad that has no vinegar. She contributed the vinegar to her second marriage and the mustard too; but as it burnt her tongue, she will contribute only the oil to her third, and leave the more pungent condiments to someone else.

And here we take leave of Mrs. Ryot-Tempest, who was not invited to Vera's wedding. She could not have gone had she been asked, so soon after her husband's death; but she felt the slight, and it was intended that she should; for Rex settled this little matter, and Captain Raleigh agreed that it was better under the circumstances not to invite her, though Vera if left to herself would have done so. Rex gave his sister away, and Father Ambrose married them according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, into which Vera had been finally received before leaving the convent at Avranches. The wedding was very quiet, only the immediate relations of the bride and bridegroom being present.

"Vera," said Captain Raleigh as the train bore them away on their honeymoon, "do you think I can make you happy?"

"Arthur, I know you can," said Vera, with her beautiful head on his heart; and since she was so confident it does not become us to have any doubts upon the point.

Married life is chequered with light and shade, like all life this side the grave. It is not till we reach the land of light and love that we can bear to live always in the light. So Captain and Mrs. Raleigh will sometimes be overshadowed by clouds, and it would be very bad for them if it were otherwise.

(THE END.)

DR. MARSH'S DAUGHTERS.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

I.

A DAZZLING gleam of white favours flashed into the admiring eyes of numerous spectators, as a string of carriages and horses turned prancing away from the church of a noted suburb of the metropolis. The gay and handsome Augusta Marsh had just become Mrs. Courtenay, and the bridal party were now returning home to the wedding breakfast.

Dr. Marsh, a physician, was popular in his small locality, and his five daughters were attractive girls, firmly expecting to make good marriages, although it was understood that they would have no fortune, for the Doctor lived up to his income, if not beyond it. The first to carry out the expectation was Augusta, who married Captain Courtenay.

The Captain was only a captain by courtesy. He had sold out of the army and lived upon his property, seven hundred a-year. Quite sufficient to marry upon, thought Augusta; but the Captain, what with his club, his tailor, his opera, and his other bachelor expenses, had found it little enough for himself. He met Augusta Marsh, fell in love with her, and determined to renounce folly and settle down into a married man. Dr. Marsh had no objection, Augusta had less; so a home was set up at Kensington, and this was the wedding-day.

It need not be described: they are all alike: if the reader has passed his, he knows what it is; if not, he can live in expectation. Captain and Mrs. Courtenay departed at two o'clock on their wedding tour, the guests followed, and the family were left alone, to themselves and to Aunt Clem. Aunt Clem, a sister of Dr. Marsh's, rejoiced in the baptismal name of Clementina, which had been long since shortened by her nieces into Clem. She was a woman of some judgment, shrewd and penetrating, especially with regard to her nieces' faults; and whenever Aunt Clem wrote word from the country that she was coming on a visit, they called it a black-letter day.

"I am so upset!" uttered Mrs. Marsh, sitting down with a half-groan.

"That's through eating custard in a morning," said Aunt Clem.

"Eating nonsense," returned Mrs. Marsh. "Did you see that young man who sat next to—which of the girls was it?—to you, Annis, I think: did you notice him, Clementina?"

"Yes. A nice-looking man."

"Nice-looking! Why, he has not a handsome feature in his face!"

"A nice countenance, for all that," persisted Aunt Clem. "One you may confide in at the first glance. What of him?"

"I am horribly afraid he is going to propose for one of the girls. He dropped a few words to me; and now, instead of leaving the house, he is downstairs, closeted with the Doctor. Which of you girls is it that has been persuading him to do this?" cried Mrs. Marsh, abruptly turning to her daughters. "Annis, why are you looking so red?"

Annis Marsh did look red, and very conscious. An attachment, hidden hitherto from all but themselves, existed between her and Geoffry Lance, and they had come to the resolution to make it known. Mrs. Marsh's surmise that he was now speaking to the Doctor was correct; and the Doctor came up with the news.

"What answer did you give him?" asked Mrs. Marsh.

"Told him that if he and Annis had made up their minds to try it, I should not say nay," replied the Doctor. "And asked him to come in and spend the evening with us."

Mrs. Marsh looked daggers; three of the young ladies looked the same. "Let them marry, Dr. Marsh! let them marry upon nothing!"

"On, come, it's not so bad as that," said the Doctor. "He has three hundred a-year. What did you and I begin life upon, my dear? Annis, ask your mamma if it was not considerably less than that."

"Nonsense!" crossly responded Mrs. Marsh, as the Doctor went out, laughing. "The cases are not at all alike, Annis; you must see that they are not. Your papa's was a rising profession; and Lance will stick at his three hundred a-year all his life."

"What is this Mr. Lance?" inquired Aunt Clem. "A gentleman?"

"Oh, of course a gentleman. He was destined for the Bar, but his father died, and there was a difficulty about money. I believe he did eat his dinners and was called, but he had nothing left to live upon whilst practice came in, and was glad to accept the secretaryship of a public institution. He gets three hundred a-year, and will never get more, for it is a fixed salary, not a rising one. Don't be led into absurdity, Annis."

"Mamma," said Annis, going up to her and speaking in low tones, full of emotion, "I will never marry against your approbation, neither would Geoffry take me on such terms. But I hope you will not hold out against us. I have heard you say how much you liked him."

"So I do, Annis," answered Mrs. Marsh, somewhat appeased by the words and tone; "but you never heard me say that I liked his

income, or thought him a desirable match for one of my daughters. Three hundred a-year ! It's quite ridiculous, child."

"We have considered it in all points, dearest mamma, and talked it over a great deal," resumed Annis, timidly, "and we feel sure that we shall do very well upon it, and live comfortably. You know I have had some experience in keeping house on small means at Aunt Ruttley's."

"For goodness' sake, Annis, don't bring up Aunt Ruttley," interrupted Sophy Marsh. "The poor Curate's stipend is only a hundred a-year, with the parsonage to live in and a flock of children to fill it. You are general factotum when you are staying there, I expect. They must live upon bread and cheese half their time, and pinch and contrive from year's end to year's end."

"But do you not see that my insight into how they manage their contriving will be of great service to me?" returned Annis, in patient tones. "Mamma, I know I could manage well on three hundred a-year, and have everything comfortable about me. You should detect no narrowness in my house, come as often as you would."

"If Lance had a prospect of an increase—of rising to five or six hundred in the course of a few years—I would let you promise to marry him then with all my heart, Annis."

"But the very fact of his not having it, of his income being a fixed one, has induced us to wish to risk it, mamma. If we wait, it will be no better ; and—oh, mamma ! pray don't say that we must separate !"

"Annis, child," interrupted Aunt Clem, "if you spend three hundred the first year, you'll want four the second, and five the third."

"But we do not intend to spend three the first year," said Annis, quickly. "Our old nurse had a favourite saying, which she always impressed upon us when we saw the sugar cup full and asked for more sugar. I repeated it one day to Geoffry, and made him laugh. 'Spare at the sack's mouth.' It is what we mean to do with our income."

"No unmarried girl can form an idea how expenses increase after the first few months," continued Aunt Clem.

"I suppose they do," assented Annis. "The wear and tear of furniture, which must be replaced, and breakages, and buying new clothes, when the old ones are worn out. All that comes."

"Ah," said Aunt Clem, "there's something worse comes. Babies."

"Oh—babies," said Annis, in a dubious tone ; "I have heard they bring love with them."

"It is to be hoped they do, poor things," sharply rejoined Aunt Clem, "or I don't know what would become of them. But they don't bring money."

"Well," said Annis, with a glowing cheek, "we have determined to try it, with all its hazards, if only papa and mamma will approve."

"And suppose your papa and mamma do not approve?"

"Then we must wait patiently for better days," sighed Annis.

"And live upon hope," said Aunt Clem, "which is about as satisfactory as living upon air. Well, Annis, I side with you. You shall have my helping word for it."

"You are not serious, Clementina!" exclaimed Mrs. Marsh.

"Indeed I am. I should not counsel every girl to marry upon three hundred a-year, but Annis and Mr. Lance seem to have well considered what they are about, and are prepared to make the best of its difficulties."

II.

IN a neighbourhood where house-rent was cheaper than at Kensington, but within a walk of it, did Mr. and Mrs. Lance settle down. For the full consent of Mrs. Marsh was won over, the wedding took place, and they were fairly launched in life, for better or for worse, upon their three hundred a-year. Their rent was moderate, and for its size the house was really a handsome-looking house, which a gentleman need not be ashamed to acknowledge as his residence. Annis seemed fully determined to carry out her scheme of economy: though, in doing this, she gave great umbrage, in one or two points, to some of her family. Upon the return of Mrs. Marsh and her daughters from their two months' annual sojourn at the sea-side, the young ladies hastened to call upon Annis, who had then been married about five months. It should be observed that Annis, being of a quiet, patient, useful disposition, had always been considerably dictated to and snubbed by her sisters; and now that she was married they forgot to discontinue the habit.

"Such bad management, Annis!" began Sophy at once. "Three o'clock in the day, and your cook answered the door to us. Where was Rebecca?"

"Rebecca is gone," replied Mrs. Lance. "I have only Mary."

"Only Mary!" uttered Miss Sophy, aghast. "Emily, did you hear that? What can you mean, Annis?"

"Well, it happened in this way," said Annis. "Rebecca did not suit: she was careless, insolent to Mary, and caused much trouble. So I gave her warning. It then occurred to me that as my wedding visits had been all paid to me, and we were not likely to see much ceremonious company, I might as well, for a time, keep only Mary. So I spoke to Geoffry, and he told me to try it if I liked, and Mary said she would rather be alone than have the annoyance of a servant like Rebecca. You cannot think how well it answers. Mary is a most excellent servant, knows her work, and does it thoroughly; and

she is always neat. You know her to be the cook, but you could not have told so from her appearance. She is not fine, it is true, but more respectable-looking than many of the house and parlour-maids."

"But such a degrading thing to keep only one servant!" remonstrated Miss Marsh. "Like the common people!"

"Ours is only a common income," laughed Annis. "I told papa what I had done one day that he drove here to see me, and he praised me for it."

"Oh, papa has such old-fashioned notions; something like your own, Annis. Wait till you hear what mamma says to it. One servant! it must tell against you with all your friends."

"No," replied Mrs. Lance, warmly; "or if it could, they would be friends not worth retaining. If they came here and found my house full of confusion, of discomfort, my servant untidy, myself unpresentable, they might have reason; but, excepting that they do not see two servants, everything is as orderly and nice as when Rebecca was here. I and my husband are not the less gentlepeople, and I am sure that they rather respect us the more for sacrificing custom to right. If we happen to have anyone to dine with us, or two or three friends for the evening, Mary sends round for her sister, who waits well."

"But how on earth do you manage with one servant? Augusta, with her three, complains bitterly that the work is not half done."

"There is an impression with many experienced people that the greater your number of servants, the less is your work done," smiled Mrs. Lance. "There is really not so much to do in this house, and plenty of time to do it in. We breakfast at eight, which gives Geoffry——"

"Eight! Do you contrive to get up?"

"Yes," said Annis, "and like it much better than our lazy hours at home. By nine, or soon after, Geoffry leaves, which gives him time to walk in comfortably to the office by a quarter to ten."

"You don't mean to say he walks?"

"Yes, and walks home, except in very bad weather. He says were it not for this walk, night and morning, he should not have sufficient exercise to keep him in health; and of course it is so much omnibus money saved. He laughs at those gentlemen who ride into town, and sit stewing in their chambers, or in an office or counting-house all day, especially those who have need to be frugal, as we have, and then ride home again: no exercise, no economy, and in time it will be no health. Well—Geoffry goes at nine. Then Mary takes away the breakfast-things, washes them up, puts her kitchen straight, and goes to her upstairs work, which in our house is not much. By eleven o'clock she has frequently changed her gown and cap, and has no more to do until time to prepare for dinner at five. One day she asked me if I could not give her some socks of her master's to darn, as she did not like sitting with her hands before her."

"Your house is quite a prodigy," cried Sophy, in tones bordering on sarcasm. "It seems there is never any cleaning going on."

"I did not say so," retorted Annis. "In a small house—small compared with ours at home—with only three people in it, and the paint, and carpets, and furniture all new, there is not a great deal of cleaning required, but what there is, is punctually done. Mary has her days for it, and on those days I help her."

"With the scrubbing?" asked Miss Marsh, with an impervious face.

"No," laughed Annis. "Whilst she does that, I go into the kitchen, wash up the breakfast things, and, should it be required, help to prepare dinner."

"Prepare for a five o'clock dinner at nine in the morning?"

"Yes, all that can be done to it. I make the pudding or the tart, should we be going to have one that day; or, if there is any meat to be hashed, I cut it up: those sort of things. Then I dust the drawing-room—and indeed I generally do that, for its ornaments take so long, and on these busy days I dust my own bedroom; and, in short, do many little odds and ends of work, so that Mary gets through her cleaning and is dressed almost as soon as on other days."

"It is a fortunate thing Mr. Lance's choice fell upon you, Annis. We should not like to be degraded to the business of a servant-of-all-work."

"There is no degradation in it," cried Annis, with spirit. "What degradation can there be? Were I a nobleman's daughter or a millionaire's, my condescending to know practically anything about it would be out of place; but in our position—yes, Emily, I speak of ours—mine and yours—it is anything but derogatory to help in these domestic trifles. If it takes me an hour a day—and it does not take me more on an average; I don't know what it may do in time—what then? It is an hour well spent; an hour that I might fritter away, if I did not have it to do. It does not make my hands less fit for my drawing afterwards or my embroidery, and it does not soil my morning dress, for I have made a large brown holland apron to go nearly round me, and I turn up my sleeves; in short, it does not render me one whit less the lady, when I sit in my drawing-room and receive any friend who may call upon me. Do I look less like one to you?"

"Psha, Annis! You picked up these notions of kitchen management at poor Aunt Ruttley's, but you ought not to be forming your ideas upon them."

"And very glad I am that I did pick them up. But if I had not, if I had had as little experience in domestic usefulness as you, I believe they would have come to me with the necessity."

"Oh, no doubt," said Sophy, scornfully; "you were inclined by nature to these low-lived notions, Annis."

"There are notions abroad," gravely responded Mrs. Lance, "that for people in our pretentious class of society (I cannot help calling it so, for we ape the ideas and manners only suited to those far above us), all participation in, all acquaintance even, with domestic duties is a thing to be ashamed of, never to be owned to, but contemptuously denied. They are wrong notions, wicked notions; false and hollow: for they lead to embarrassment, to unpaid debts, to the wronging of our neighbours; and the sooner the fashion goes out, the more sensible society will prove itself. I don't know which is the worst: a woman who entirely neglects to look after her household, where her station and circumstances demand it, or one who makes herself a domestic drudge. Both extremes are bad, and both should be avoided."

"Do you mean that as a cut at Augusta?" asked Miss Marsh—"the neglecting her household?"

"No, Emily, I was speaking generally," replied Mrs. Lance; "though I wish Augusta did look a little more to hers. It would have been well for us, I think, had mamma brought us up in a more domestic manner. There is another fallacy of the present day: bringing up young ladies to play and dance, but utterly incapable as to the ruling of a household."

"Speak for yourself, if you please, Annis. We would rather be excused kitchen rule."

"Why, look at Augusta," returned Mrs. Lance; "would it be well for her, or not, to check and direct her household? Their expenditure must be very large: too large, I fear, for the Captain's income."

"At any rate, you seem determined not to err on the same side. Take care you do not degenerate into the domestic drudge, Annis."

"I shall never do that—at least, if I know myself," quickly replied Mrs. Lance. "I have too much regard for my husband, am too solicitous to retain his respect and affection: a domestic drudge cannot remain a refined, well-informed woman, an enlightened companion. We keep up our literary tastes, our reading; and our evenings are delightful. No, I shall escape that, I hope, Emily; though I am learning to iron."

"I wonder you don't learn to wash," indignantly retorted Miss Marsh.

"I did wash a pair of lace sleeves the other morning," laughed Mrs. Lance, "but they turned out so yellow that Mary had to submit them to some whitening process of her own, and I do not think I shall try again. She washes all my lace things and Geoffry's collars, and she is teaching me to iron them. Ironing was an accomplishment I did not see much of at the parsonage, for I believe everything in the whole weekly wash was mangled, except my uncle's shirts and bands. His surplice always was; aunt used to say he

would know no better. I am trying to be very useful, I assure you. I go to market."

"Go where?"

"To market. To the butcher's and the greengrocer's, and to the other tradespeople. Not every day, but on a Saturday always, and perhaps once in the week besides."

"To save the legs of the boys who come round for orders?" asked Miss Jemima Marsh, who was a very silent girl, and rarely spoke.

"No. To save Geoffry's pocket," replied Mrs. Lance. "For the first two or three months we ordered everything that way, but I found it would not do. With meat especially. We had unprofitable joints, without knowing the weight or the price, for in delivering the orders to the boy, the butcher of course sends what he likes, and charges what he likes. Now that I go myself to the butcher's I choose my meat, and see it weighed, and know the price of everything before I buy it. It is a very great economy."

"I don't think Annis is wrong there," decided Sophy; "for many very good families go to market themselves."

"And I wish more did," added Mrs. Lance. "I wish you could persuade Augusta into doing so. I spoke to her about it, and she asked me whether I was out of my mind."

"There is less occasion for Mrs. Courtenay to trouble herself," said Miss Marsh, loftily; "she did not marry upon three hundred a-year."

"Well, I am very happy," said Annis brightly, "although we have only three hundred a-year."

"And one servant," interposed Miss Marsh.

"And one servant," laughed Annis. "But I assure you we manage better without Rebecca than with her, and as we shall be obliged in a few months' time to take a second servant, I thought we ought to do with one until then."

III.

THE time went on till Mrs. Courtenay had three children and Mrs. Lance had two, the former to her unspeakable dismay.

For she could not afford it. No; Captain and Mrs. Courtenay had afforded themselves too many luxuries to leave room for that of babies. They had committed a terrible mistake in marrying upon their seven hundred a-year, and that not an increasing income. It was not only that they had set up their household and begun housekeeping upon a scale that would absorb every shilling of it, but the ex-Captain, accustomed to his clubs and their expensive habits, was not a man who could practise economy out of doors, any more than his wife understood it within. The Captain could not put on a soiled pair of gloves; he

could not give up his social habits ; he never dreamt of such a thing as not going to the opera several times in the season, and to the theatres *ad libitum*, his wife being often with him ; it never occurred to him to give up his daily bottle of expensive wine, and he rarely scrupled to take a cab, when an omnibus, or his own legs, would have served as well. They began housekeeping upon three servants—two maids, and a tiger, who ate as much as the whole house put together. The house was larger than that of Mrs. Lance, and they kept more company, but two efficient servants, with proper management, might have done the work well ; only it was necessary, for appearance' sake, so both Captain and Mrs. Courtenay deemed, to take (not being able to afford a footman) a third maid or a tiger : and they took the last-named article. Next came the babies, and with the advent of the first, the tiger was discharged and a third maid taken in his place : and now that there were three children there were four maids.

Captain and Mrs. Courtenay also liked to go out of town in autumn, and they were fond of gaiety, went to parties and gave them. Their housekeeping was on an extensive scale compared with their income : Mrs. Courtenay was no manager ; she knew literally nothing of practical domestic details when she married, and she did not attempt to acquire them. Her servants were improvident and wasteful ; she could not shut her eyes to that ; but her attempts at remedying the evil only amounted to an occasional storm of scolding, and to sending off cook after cook. They fell into debt, they went deeper into it with every month and year, and Captain Courtenay, besieged out of his seven senses, was fain to patch up matters by borrowing money of a gentleman named Ishmael Levi. Of course he fleeced him wholesale.

Their real troubles of life were looming ominously near, the fruits of their short-sighted union, of their improvident course. Captain Courtenay and his wife, with their seven hundred a-year, had launched into marriage, their friends rejoicing over their assured prospects : Mr. Lance and Annis, and their despised three hundred, had been brow-beaten in society for daring to risk it : but the despised ones were conquerors, and the lauded ones had failed. How was it ? The one party had looked their future full in the face, and deliberately resolved to confine their simple desires within less than their income, arming themselves against temptation ; the other had not so looked at it, but had brought themselves into embarrassment through what they would have called sheer inability to keep out of it. They had not calculated ; they had begun life too expensively ; had not controlled their self-indulgences ; everything was on too large a scale : and now neither knew how to go back to a smaller.

They were sitting together one dull winter's day, very dull themselves, and talking over the aspect of affairs in a dull strain. The aspect was worse than either thought : Mrs. Courtenay really did not know its extent, and the Captain was blind and careless. The Captain

had received his quarterly income, and had immediately parted with most of it, for sundry demands were pressing. How they were to go on to the next quarter, and how the Christmas bills were to be paid, was hidden in the womb of the future.

"They are so much larger than usual," murmured Captain Courtenay, drawing a china basket towards him, the bills' receptacle, and leisurely proceeding to unfold some of them.

"Each year brings additional expense," remarked Mrs. Courtenay. "Four servants cost more than three: not to speak of the children; though they are but little expense yet."

Captain Courtenay had the contents of one of the bills under his eye at the time his wife spoke. "Little expense, you say, Augusta! I suppose this is for them, and it's pretty nearly twenty pounds. It's headed 'Clare's Baby-linen Warehouse.'"

"I meant in the matter of food. Of course they have to be clothed: and I don't know anything more costly than infants' dress. Cambric, and lace, and bassinets, and all the rest of it."

"So I should think," quoth the Captain; "here's thirty shillings for six shirts. Do you put babies into shirts?"

"What else should we put them into?"

"How long are they—a foot? Five shillings a shirt! Why, it's nearly as much as I give for mine."

"Delicate French cambric, trimmed with Valenciennes," explained Mrs. Courtenay. "We can't dress a baby in hopsacking."

"Lace is the largest item in the bill. Here's three pounds eighteen shillings for lace, Augusta."

"Oh, they are dreadful little things to destroy their cap borders. When they get three or four months old, up go their hands and away they pull, and the lace is soon in tatters. This last darling baby has already destroyed two."

"Throw off their caps and let them pull at their own heads, if they want to pull," cried the Captain. "That's how I should cure them, Augusta."

"Would you," retorted Mrs. Courtenay. "A baby without a cap is frightful. Except for its long white robes, no one could tell whether it was a monkey or a child."

"Some of this lace is charged half-a-crown a yard, and some three and sixpence."

"The three and sixpenny was for the christening. Of course *that* had to be good."

"I saw some lace marked up at twopence a yard, yesterday, in Oxford Street, quite as pretty as any the baby wears, for all I can see. That would be good enough to tear, Augusta."

"My dear, as you don't understand babies' things, the remark may be excused," said Mrs. Courtenay. "Common rubbish of cotton lace is not fit——"

"Hallo!" shouted the Captain, with an emphasis that startled his

wife, as he opened another of the bills, "here's ninety-four pounds for meat this year!"

"So I saw," mournfully replied Mrs. Courtenay.

"How can we have eaten meat to that amount? We can't have eaten it."

"I suppose *we* have not eaten it, you and I; but it has been consumed in the house," was the testy rejoinder of Mrs. Courtenay, whose conscience secretly accused her of something being radically wrong in the housekeeping department, and which she, its head, did not know how to set right.

"Besides the fish and poultry bills, and lots of game we had sent us, and I sometimes dining at the club! How is it, Augusta?"

"I wish I could tell how it is," she answered: "that is, I wish I could tell how to lessen it. The bills come in weekly, and I look them over, and there's not a single joint that seems to have been had in unnecessarily. They do eat enormously in the kitchen; but how is it to be prevented? We cannot lock up the food."

"The servants must be outrageously extravagant."

"I often tell you so, but you don't listen; and I am at continual warfare with the cook. As to the butter that goes, it must melt, for it never can be used. She makes out that you and I and the children eat four pounds of fresh butter every week. And they are so exacting about their own dinner. They are not satisfied with what remainder of meat may be in the house and making it do—meat that I know would be amply sufficient—but must have something in addition—pork chops, or sausages, or something of the sort. And thus the meat bill runs up."

Captain Courtenay answered only by a gesture of annoyance. Perhaps his wife took it as a reflection upon herself.

"But what am I to do, Robert? I cannot go and preside at their dinner, and portion it out; and I cannot say so-and-so is enough and you shall have no more, when cook declares it is not enough. I tell them they are not to eat meat at supper, but I may as well tell the sun not to shine, for I know they do eat it. I would turn them off to-morrow, every one of them, if I thought I could change for the better; but I might only get worse, for they would be sure to go and give the place a bad name, out of revenge."

"Can't you change the cook?"

"I have changed her three times in the last year, and each one seems to have less notion of economy than the last. They are fair-spoken before my face and second all I say, but the extravagance is not diminished."

Captain Courtenay opened the bills—bill by bill—and laid them in a pile on the table. "Augusta," said he, in a gravely serious tone, "we must retrench, or we shall soon be in a hobble."

"I am willing," answered his wife; "but where can we begin?"

"Let us consider," resumed the Captain, thoughtfully; "where

can it be? It cannot be in the rent and taxes; of course they must go on just the same; and the insurance; and I must pay the interest of the money we owe; and we must have our meals as usual. We must dismiss one of the servants."

"*That's* equally impossible," returned Mrs. Courtenay. "Which would you dismiss? Three children, two of them in arms, as may be said, require two nurses, and cannot be attended to without. Then there must be two for the house: one could not wait, and cook, and clean, and answer the door—oh, impossible."

Captain Courtenay leaned his head upon his hand: it did indeed seem as if there was not the slightest loophole in the domestic department which afforded a chance of retrenchment.

"Miss Marsh," said the housemaid, ushering in a lady.

Mrs. Courtenay looked round for her sister Emily, but it was Aunt Clem.

"Well," said she, as the Captain, with whom she was a favourite, ensconced her into the warmest seat, "and how are you getting on?"

"Middling," laughed the Captain. "Looking blue over the Christmas bills."

"Ah," said Aunt Clem, as she took off her bonnet, "they are often written on blue paper. You should settle your bills weekly; it is the safest and most economical plan: if you let them run on, you pay for it through the nose."

"I wish these accounts could be paid, even through the nose," cried the Captain. "Our expenses are getting the mastery, Aunt Clem, and we cannot see where to retrench. We were talking about it now."

"Is that heap all bills? Let me look at them. You need have no secrets from an old woman like me."

The Captain tossed them into her lap, and the first she looked at happened to be the one for the baby-linen. Aunt Clem studied it through her spectacles, and then studied Augusta's face.

"Never saw anything so extravagant in my life. Who did you think you were buying for? A little princess?"

Augusta was too nettled to reply.

"I don't see that a baby ought to cost as much as a man," put in the Captain; "but Augusta tells me I know nothing about it. I could get half a dozen shirts for thirty shillings."

"Of course you could. And these ought to have cost six."

"Now, aunt!" resentfully ejaculated Augusta. "How, pray?"

"Six shillings at the very outside. You should have bought the lawn and made them yourself."

"Babies' shirts at a shilling apiece!" said Augusta, scornfully. "These are richly trimmed with Valenciennes lace and insertion, Aunt Clem."

"Trim my old bedgown with Valenciennes!" irreverently snapped Aunt Clem. "It would be just as sensible a trick. Who sees the

shirt when the baby has it on? Nonsense, Augusta! Valenciennes lace may be very well in its proper place, but not for those who can't pay their Christmas bills."

Augusta was indignant. The Captain only smiled.

"What's this last?" continued Aunt Clem. "Lace?—four pounds, less two shillings, for lace? Here, take your bill; I have seen enough of it. No wonder you find your accounts heavy, if they are all on this scale."

"It is not dear," fired Augusta. "Half-a-crown a yard—the other was for the christening—is cheap for babies' lace."

"I told Augusta I saw some yesterday in a shop window at twopence a yard, and it looked as well," observed the Captain.

"I don't quite say that," said Aunt Clem; "twopenny lace would neither look nor wear well. But there's another sort of lace, of medium quality, used almost exclusively for infants' caps——"

"Trumpery cotton trash!" interrupted Mrs. Courtenay.

"It is a very pretty lace, rich-looking and durable," went on Aunt Clem, disdaining the interruption, "and if not thread, it looks like it; but I believe it to be thread. It will last for two children, and it costs about ninepence a yard. Annis has never bought any other."

"How can you say so, aunt? I'm sure her children's caps always look nice."

"I know they do. You don't believe in this lace, because you have not looked out for it," observed Aunt Clem. "You go to Clare's—stepping out of a cab, I daresay, at the door—and ask to look at some good nursery lace. Of course they show you the real; they don't attempt to show you anything inferior. But Annis, when she was buying these things, went to Clare's—and I happened to be with her: she did not ask, off-hand, for rich lace, or real lace, she said, 'Have you a cheaper description of lace that will wear and answer the purpose?' and they showed her what I tell you of. She bought no other, and very well it has worn and looks; it lasted her first baby, and it is lasting this one. I was so pleased with her method of going to work—not in the way of caps alone, mind you, but of everything—that I sent her four yards of pillow lace from the country for a best cap for her child. At the time you were married," added Aunt Clem, looking at them both over her spectacles, "I said you would not do half as well as Lance and Annis, though you had more than double their income. You are the wrong sort of folk."

"At any rate, I cannot be expected to understand lace," said the Captain.

"But you might understand other things, and give them up," returned Aunt Clem. "You might give up your West-end society, and your gaities, and your extravagant mode of dressing——"

"I'm sure I don't dress extravagantly," interrupted the Captain.

"I'm sure you do," said Aunt Clem: "in that way you are worse than Augusta, and she's bad enough. It may not be ex-

travagant in the abstract, but it is extravagant in proportion to your income. You might also give up having parties at home, and going out to them, and your wine at your club, and your theatres. Unless a man who has only a limited income can resign these amusements, he has no right to marry. But in saying this, I wish to cast no reflection on those who cannot: all men are not calculated by nature to economise in domestic privacy; only, let such keep single."

"I suppose you think I was not," laughed Captain Courtenay.

"I am positive you were not. Nor Augusta either. And you'll have a hard fight and tussle before you can submit to its hardships. They will be sore hardships to you; to Lance and his wife they are pleasures; yet he is just as much of a gentleman as you are, and was brought up as expensively. But you are of totally different dispositions."

"What a pity we were not differently paired, since they are the two clever ones, and we the incapables; I with Lance, and Annis with Robert!" exclaimed Augusta, sarcastically.

"Then there would be four incapables instead of two—or what would amount to the same," unceremoniously observed Aunt Clem. "You would have spent poor Lance out of house and home; and Annis would have led a weary and wretched life of it, for the Captain's expenses out of doors would have rendered futile her economy at home. No, you have been rightly paired. You have not half the comfort with your seven hundred a-year that they have upon three."

"Go on, go on, Aunt Clem," cried Augusta; "why don't you magnify them into angels? More comfort than we have! Look at our home, our mode of life, and compare it with theirs; their paltry two servants and their shabby living. I don't suppose they take wine once in a month."

"And *not* taking it, do not feel the want of it. But when you say shabby living, you are prejudiced, Augusta. Though their dinners are plain, there is always plenty, and what more can people want."

The Captain laughed, for Aunt Clem had talked herself into a heat. "As to wine, Lance might surely manage to allow himself half a pint every day," said he.

"If Lance were intent on his own gratification, I daresay he would," answered Aunt Clem.

"He and Annis might be comfortable in housekeeping matters on three hundred a-year."

"Remarkably so," was Aunt Clem's response. "But the worst of it is, there are other expenses, and plenty of them. Rent, taxes, insurance, clothes, wages, doctors, omnibuses, books, newspapers, and wear and tear of linen and furniture, besides church and charity, for Lance and his wife have nothing of the heathen about them. None of these items come under the head of eatables and drinkables, but all have to be provided for out of the three hundred a-year. What's your butcher's bill annually?" abruptly asked Aunt Clem.

"Ninety-four pounds this year," said the Captain.

Aunt Clem groaned. "That comes of having two dinners."

"How do you mean? We only take one dinner a day."

"Two dinners," repeated Aunt Clem; "one for you and another for the servants. They ought to dine after you."

"But the servants must dine," said Mrs. Courtenay. "It cannot signify as to cost whether they dine early or late."

"It signifies everything, and by having two dinners the meat bill gets almost doubled. What are your servants having for dinner to-day?"

"To-day—oh, they have a shoulder of mutton."

"And what shall you have?"

"We are going to have minced veal and a fowl."

"Minced veal! the most unprofitable dish anyone can put upon their table. You may take an unlimited quantity of it and still be hungry. But that's not my present argument. If you had only one dinner, the shoulder of mutton would have served you all; your table first and theirs afterwards, and there'd be one expense. And the servants cannot have their rule over the meat so uncontrolled; less comes into the house; less remains cold; and cold meat does not go so far as hot, and when hashed and minced it is half wasted."

"Our servants won't dine on cold meat above twice a week, I know that," said Mrs. Courtenay. "But as to their dining after us, they would say they could not wait; they would leave first."

"Then they should leave—and with great pleasure, I should say," cried Aunt Clem. "It is of no consequence what time people dine, provided they have their regular hour; their appetite soon accustoms itself to it. You might dine at five instead of six or seven, and they after you. Annis's servants do, and she gets no grumbling."

"Well," said the Captain, carelessly, "we have rubbed on somehow, with all our mismanagement, and we must contrive to rub on still. Perhaps we shall give up our summer excursion this year, and that will be an economy. I am going down to the club for an hour. I shall find you here on my return, Aunt Clem: you'll stop and help us out with the minced veal."

"What a barbarous picture you do draw of domestic economy, Aunt Clem!" exclaimed Augusta as her husband quitted the room. "Ninepenny lace, and common home-made lawn shirts for babies, and all the house dining from one joint, and calling minced veal unprofitable! Your ideas are not suited to us; to the Captain."

"Child," answered Aunt Clem, "I am only thinking what is suited to your income. With seven hundred a-year you ought to be able to afford liberal housekeeping and expenditure; but it appears you have so many large expenses that the house must, or ought, of necessity, to suffer. Your husband hinted at debt; and indeed I don't see how he can have kept out of it."

"We are very much in debt ; though how much he will not tell me : he says it is enough for him to be worried over it, without my being so."

"Then why don't you curtail your expenditure, Augusta ?"

"Curtail where ? There is not one of the servants we could possibly do without : and I'm sure I try all I can to impress saving in the kitchen."

"There has been one fault throughout, Augusta. You began on the wrong scale : it is very easy to increase a scale of expenditure, but remarkably difficult to lessen it. The common mistake in marrying is, that people begin by living up to their income."

"After all, aunt, if I could curtail in petty domestic trifles, it would be of little service. It is the larger outlays that have hurt us : our going out of town, and our visiting, and my husband's private expenses. He cannot give up these expenses, unless he gives up his friends. Fancy Captain Courtenay being obliged to relinquish his club ! It's not to be thought of. We must rub on, as he says, somehow or other."

"He does not seem to be rubbing on to his club now," said Aunt Clem, who was at the window. "He is standing to talk."

"And what queer-looking men he has got hold of !" uttered Augusta, following her. "Shabby coats and greasy hats. He is coming back, and they with him. What can they want ?"

Aunt Clem drew in her lips ominously, but she said nothing. Mrs. Courtenay was only surprised, for the men had entered with her husband. She opened the room-door, and saw the Captain advancing to her with a white face.

"My dear Augusta—don't be alarmed, or—or—put out : Aunt Clem can tell you there's no occasion, for these trifles happen every day : but—I—am—arrested."

"Arrested !" shrieked Augusta, flying to cling to his arm. "Will they drag you off to prison ?"

"For to-day I fear they must ; but——"

"Ain't no fear about it, sir," interposed one of the men, "it's certain. As well out with the truth, sir, to the lady ; it answers best with 'em."

"You'll stop here, and take care of her, Aunt Clem," said the crestfallen Captain, as Augusta burst into sobs ; "don't let her grieve. I daresay I shall get it all settled and be at home to-morrow."

"This comes of such folk as you rushing headlong into marriage !" tartly exclaimed Aunt Clem.

IV.

It had been a very blue look-out : Captain Courtenay once called it so, when he was examining his Christmas bills ; but that blue was *couleur de rose* compared with the deep blue of the look-out now.

Captain and Mrs. Courtenay had married upon seven hundred a-year and no further expectations. A sufficient sum for moderate tastes and moderate desires, but unfortunately neither the Captain nor his wife could stoop to these. A few years of extravagance, within doors and without, brought on a climax, and the Captain was civilly marshalled to prison in a cab. With some trouble, and at a considerable sacrifice, he succeeded, after a week's incarceration, in "arranging matters;" but to do so cost him far more than his improvidence had bargained for: his income was cut down three-sevenths, and would continue so docked for many years to come.

They left their house at Brompton: to economise there, in the very sight of their intimate friends and neighbours, would be too galling: and settled in a smaller one, with their children, four now, and two servants. Perhaps the most cruel point in the whole affair, to Mrs. Courtenay, was the being reduced to keeping only two, a nurse and maid-of-all-work. If she had despised one thing more than another in her sister's household, who had married for love, upon three hundred a-year, it was that useful but sometimes very troublesome appendage, a servant-of-all-work. The house they moved into was close to that of her sister, Mrs. Lance; and for some time after taking possession of it, Mrs. Courtenay chiefly spent her days in tears, and Captain Courtenay in sitting over the fire, with a pipe and a newspaper.

The poor Captain was really to be pitied. He had the misfortune to be an idle man, a man of no profession or occupation: and he had been obliged to give up his comfortable (and expensive) club, his opera, and his kid gloves. All his old habits, confirmed and strong, were rudely broken through, and instead of playing the dandy abroad, he gave way to the sulks at home.

It was not altogether a desirable home, for Mrs. Courtenay had no idea of management; the servants, scenting what sort of a mistress they had, showed less, and the young children tore about the house uncontrolled, destroying the peace of every room, and frequently coming to grief and screams. As to saving in the domestic details of housekeeping, Mrs. Courtenay had not the faintest conception how to begin, and the house remained a perpetual scene of worry and confusion.

One evening Mr. and Mrs. Lance were sitting together, after dinner, in the comfortable dining-room of their pleasant house. Not that their house was fine or large, but pleasant and comfortable it certainly was; for there were no storms in it, whether from parents, servants, or children, but there was well-ordered regularity. Their children—they had three—were with them now, but they were not trained to give way to wayward humours. Mr. Lance was a barrister, but briefless, and he had preferred accepting the secretaryship of a public institution, at three hundred a-year, to starving on expectation, in a wig and gown. Whilst they were talking, Mrs. Courtenay

was shown in, and down she immediately sat upon a chair and burst into tears. Mr. and Mrs. Lance approached her with surprise and commiseration ; and little Annie, the eldest child, was so aghast at the sight, that she backed against the wall, in doubt whether she should not set up a cry too.

"I am tired and worried out of my life, Annis," began Mrs. Courtenay to her sister. "All my efforts to be a good manager turn out wrong. I thought I would try and do the dinner to-day, for that servant of mine is so insolent and extravagant : I said there was enough mutton in the house for dinner, made into a haricot——"

"Do you mean an Irish stew?" interrupted Mrs. Lance.

"That's what vulgar people call it, Annis. Susan drew down the corners of her mouth, and said not if *she* made it ; so the remark nettled me, and I said I would do it myself. And I thought I did do it beautifully," added the unhappy lady, with a choking sob between every other word, "and when it came to be turned out it was all burnt black to the saucepan, and smelt like a dozen blankets on fire."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Mrs. Lance.

"So there was no dinner for any of us, and the Captain went out, swearing, with a bang that shook the ceilings, to get some where he could. Do give me a few lessons, Annis, and tell me how you manage—though I used to laugh at your ways. I'm afraid he'll swear at me next, and I should never survive that."

Mr. Lance rose from his chair and smiled. "It will all come right, Mrs. Courtenay, if you only have a little perseverance. Annis was a good manager from the first, but she is better now. And whilst you take your first lesson, I will go in to my friend Desborough : I was telling Annis, when you came, that I owed him a visit."

"I could not swallow a scrap of anything if you paid me. I'm too miserable," sobbed Mrs. Courtenay, interrupting her sister's hospitable intentions. "I will drink a cup of tea when you take yours."

"You shall have it directly, Augusta. The servants must have finished dinner by now, and the children shall go back to the nursery."

"Tell me exactly how you manage throughout the day, Annis," said Mrs. Courtenay, when they were alone. "I will try, in my own house, to imitate it."

"I manage much as I used to do in my early married days, only there is more to do," said Mrs. Lance. "Mary gets up at six——"

"And my beauty crawls downstairs at eight," interrupted Mrs. Courtenay, in tones of wrath, "and the more I talk to her, the longer she lies ; and the nurse is worse."

"Those sort of servants would be useless in my house," said Annis. "We breakfast at eight, and I am out of bed before seven."

"What in the world do you get up so soon for? You, I mean. It is unnecessary to rise before seven for an eight o'clock breakfast."

"I find it none too early. I like to be neatly dressed ; not to come downstairs 'a figure,' as it is called, in badly-arranged hair, or an untidy, ugly dressing-gown. Then I spare a few minutes for my private reading, and a minute for the nursery, for I do not choose Annie to slur over her little prayers to a careless nurse. I hope you always hear your children theirs, Augusta."

"I hear them now and then at night, if I have time ; never in a morning ; I don't think they say any. What do prayers matter for such little children ?"

"The impressions made on young children last for ever, and they tend to good or to evil," remarked Annis in a low voice. "But let me go on. Annie breakfasts with us, the other two with nurse in the kitchen : that are too young for *that* to hurt them," she added in a meaning tone. "Afterwards, when Geoffry is gone, I read to Annie for five minutes or so——"

"Read what?" asked Mrs. Courtenay in surprise. "Fairy tales ?"

"Bible stories," answered Mrs. Lance gravely. "What would become of me, of them, if I did not strive to train my children to God ? How should I answer for it hereafter ? Then begins the business of the day. I occupy myself in the nursery and mind the children whilst nurse helps with the beds ; and then——"

"Making yourself a nurse the first thing in the morning !" groaned Mrs. Courtenay. "I'm sure I can never bring myself to that."

"Everyone to their taste," laughed Annis. "I would rather be a nurse in the morning than in the evening. When the beds are made, nurse relieves me, and I go down and help Mary in the kitchen. Sometimes I wash the breakfast-things, and make a pudding ; sometimes I iron the fine things : in short, I do what there is to do of the work I have apportioned to myself. By eleven or twelve o'clock, as it may happen, it is all done, and I am at liberty for the day ; to sit down in the drawing-room to my sewing, and chat with any friends who may call to see me. Useful sewing now, Augusta," she laughed ; "no longer embroidery, or drawing, or painting, or wax flowers."

"Have you given up all those pleasant recreations ?"

"I really fear I have. I find no time for them. I make all my children's things, and part of my own and my husband's. On washing-days I am in the nursery until dinner-time, and we always, that day, have a cold dinner, that both servants may help. You see I manage as I used to, and it is only repeating what I have told you before."

"You do seem to have such super-excellent servants !" exclaimed Mrs. Courtenay, in sarcastic tones.

"Yes, I have very good ones. Servants are much cried out against, and no doubt some are good and some are bad, but they should be carefully chosen before admitted to the house, and I think that a good mistress generally meets with good servants. I do not

mean that mine are faultless : it would indeed be a miracle : but they know they are well off with me ; for though I am resolute in having their duties thoroughly performed, I am a considerate mistress, anxious for their own comfort and welfare."

"And you never have but one dinner. Aunt Clem went on so to me once, in the other house, about my having two dinners, one for ourselves and another for the servants. She called it waste."

"It is so," answered Mrs. Lance ; "both of time and provisions. The children have theirs in the middle of the day : they are too young to wait, but that is not much trouble. A rice pudding, perhaps, and a little steak or mutton chops : the baby does not eat meat yet."

"But my servants grumble my life out when I order only one dinner : it was my saying they must wait to-day, and dine after us, that put Susan out about the meat."

"I do not wonder at it : with such irregularity, which to them must appear like caprice, how can you expect cheerful obedience ? Let them understand, once for all, that they dine after you, and if they persist in being discontented, the best plan will be to change."

"Change ! I am always changing : you know I am, Annis. And then the taking out the children—oh, the worry it is ! Of course I am not going streaming out with them, and Susan can't go and leave the work, so I hire a girl, the greengrocer's daughter, and give her sixpence a time ; but the nurse does not choose to approve of it, and says she is more worry than help."

"Ah, we are well off in that respect," said Mrs. Lance, with animation. "We have no right to the square, not absolutely living in it, but somehow we are popular in the neighbourhood, and have had a key given to us. It is so useful : the nurse goes there with all three children, and can sit down with the baby whilst Annie and the boy run about."

"All things seem to turn up well for you," rejoined Mrs. Courtenay, querulously. "I'm sure they don't for most people. I wish I could get a key of the square."

"I think that when people set their faces resolutely to their duty and strive to make the best of it, humbly trusting to *be helped* in it, that many things do turn up for them quite wonderfully," answered Mrs. Lance gently.

"Annis ! the idea of your mixing up religious notions with the petty concerns of life ! It is quite methodistical."

"Rather high church, of the two, I fancy," responded Annis, good-humouredly. "But rely upon it, Augusta, that until people have learnt to remember that God's eye is upon them in all the trifles of daily life, they have not learnt how to live."

"You harp, too, upon 'system' and 'regularity.' I know I shall never learn to practise either."

"But you must ; for the comfort of a family mainly depends upon that. At five, whilst we dine, the children take their tea in the

nursery, and when we have finished, they come to us while the servants dine. By seven, the children are in bed."

"And then you sit stitching away here all the evening!" said Mrs. Courtenay.

"Very often I do, and Geoffry reads to me: the newspaper, or our periodicals. And nurse does her part to the stitching in the nursery."

"Such a humdrum, Darby-and-Joan sort of life!"

"We would not change it for yours, Augusta," laughed Annis. "But I do not work always: sometimes I read, or we play at chess, or cribbage, and now and then a friend drops in, or we drop in to a friend's. Believe me, we are thoroughly happy and contented. I told mamma I knew we could manage well on three hundred a-year, and we have done so, and are fully satisfied. All of you, except papa, have spoken scornfully of my lowering myself to two servants, and one of those a nurse, but I have more regularity and comfort in my house than you had with your four. No one who comes here sees them otherwise than perfectly neat and tidy; for both of the servants understand that were they to appear otherwise they must look out for fresh situations."

"Do your servants have meat at luncheon?"

"Never. They have it at one meal only—dinner. They take as much as they please then. Believe me, Augusta, we have no stinting in necessities, though we cannot afford luxuries."

"You are not too luxurious in dress, that's certain," said Mrs. Courtenay, looking at her sister's ruby merino; "and yet, it really looks well," she added, "with its pretty fringe trimmings."

"Quite as well, for a home dress, as your rich silk, Augusta. Especially with that great splash of grease down the front."

"Splash of grease!" echoed Mrs. Courtenay, hastily casting her eyes on her dress, and beholding a broad running stain. "There! I must have done that to-day, meddling with that abominable cooking."

"You surely did not do your cooking in that dress!" exclaimed the younger sister.

"What else could I do it in?" fretfully retorted Mrs. Courtenay. "I could not be in a shabby wrapper at two or three o'clock in the day, when people might be calling."

"I would not be seen in either, at any time, Augusta. But there's the advantage of getting over these domestic tasks early in the day. You should have a large apron to put on in the kitchen, as I do."

"To save that dress?" sarcastically asked Augusta Courtenay, who was in a thorough ill-temper.

"No, this is not my morning dress," quietly returned her sister. "That is only alpaca. But it is nicely made, not a 'wrapper' or a 'loose jacket,' and is neither dirty nor shabby."

"How do you make soup," pursued Mrs. Courtenay, ignoring the

implied reproof. "Susan sends up ours all water, and the Captain can't eat it; although she has four pounds of meat to make it with, which looks boiled to rags, fit only to throw away."

"Oh, Augusta! four pounds of meat wasted in soup! You will never economise at that rate. Poor people—as, perhaps, I may venture to call you now, with ourselves—should never attempt expensive soups. For them it is waste of money."

"I am sure I have heard *you* talk of having soup often enough," angrily returned Mrs. Courtenay.

"Yes; soups that cost nothing; or next to nothing."

"Like that parsonage soup!" cried Mrs. Courtenay, bursting into laughter. "Do you remember, Annis? You came home from one of your visits at Aunt Ruttley's boasting of some delicious, cheap soup; and when mamma inquired how this delicious cheap soup was made, you said of young pea-shells. It remained a standing joke against you. Is that how your soups are made?"

"No. Winter is not the season for pea-shells. But I suppose what I am going to say to you will appear quite as much of a joke. We rarely make our pea-soup of anything but bones."

"Bones!" repeated Mrs. Courtenay, as much astonished as if her sister had said feathers.

"We never waste a bone. Beef-bones, mutton-bones, all, in short, are boiled, and boiled long, for about twelve hours; they stand by the side of the kitchen fire, not monopolising it; with an onion or two, a turnip, a carrot, and celery. It is all strained off, and the next morning is in a jelly. The peas are then boiled in it, with some mint, and it is an excellent soup. Then sometimes we have French soup, as we call it. That poor French governess, whom I invited to stay with me when she lost her situation, taught Mary how to make it. She used to make it for herself on Fridays, and say she preferred it to fish. I thought at first she said it out of delicacy, to prevent my going to the expense of fish for her, but I believed afterwards that she really did prefer it. It was a treat to her, for she never had it in England."

"What soup is it?"

"The French call it *soupe maigre*. On fast days they put a piece of butter into a saucepan, on other days a piece of dripping, let it melt, and put into it a quantity of vegetables ready cut in small pieces, carrots, turnips, leeks, and potatoes. They stir all these about over the fire, till they are well saturated with the dripping or butter, but not to brown them, then fill up the saucepan with water, and let it boil for two or three hours, adding pepper and salt to taste. You cannot think what a nice soup it makes."

"I am willing to take your word for it," returned Mrs. Courtenay, with an ungracious accent. "French soup made of dripping, and pea-soup made of bones! I wonder what the Captain would say if I placed such before him?"

"If placed before him well made, he would say they were excellent," was the rejoinder of Annis. "My husband thinks them so, and it is not necessary to proclaim your mysteries of economy over the dinner table. Both these soups are very grateful on a cold winter's day. Besides," she laughed, "they save the meat; my servants like these soups so much now that they often make their dinner of them, and will put away the meat untouched. Augusta," broke off Mrs. Lance, in a changed tone, "if you are to despise every word I say, as I see you do, why come to me for information?"

"No, I do not despise your words, Annis; I am obliged to you for being at the trouble to explain to me; but I cannot help despising the cookery; the odd, parsimonious way of concocting soups out of nothing. It is so ridiculous."

"Had I begun life upon the income you did, Augusta, I daresay I should never have learnt these frugal odds and ends of cookery. But I can testify that they are very helpful, both to comfort and to the purse; and if those who enjoy only my confined income do not understand them, or have them practised in their household, they ought to do so."

"What ought pies to be made of?" interrupted Mrs. Courtenay, remembering another domestic stumbling-block.

"Many things. Apples, and rhubarb, and——"

"Nonsense, Annis! You know I mean the crust."

"No, I did not. I make mine of lard. Sometimes of beef dripping."

"Beef drip——Well, what next? You must have learnt that at the parsonage."

"No, indeed, the parsonage was not rich enough to possess dripping. If by good luck it did have any, the children used to scramble for it to spread on their bread. Well clarified, it makes a very fair crust. But I generally use lard."

"Susan won't use anything but the best fresh butter; such a quantity; about a pound and a half to every pie."

"Make them yourself, Augusta."

"I can't; no one can eat them. I tried my hand at three or four, and they were as hard as lead, and could not be cut into: you might throw them from here to York, and they'd never break. But all these things are nothing to the washing; that's dreadful. I have taken to have most of it done at home, for the expense was ruinous, and the servants would not so much as wash out a duster. Every Monday morning a woman comes——"

"You should have it done on Tuesday," interrupted Annis, "and the clothes should be soaped and put in soak on Monday morning: they come clean with half the labour. And every fortnight would be often enough."

"They seem not to come clean at all in our house," groaned

Mrs. Courtenay. "I tell Susan she must help the woman, but I believe all the help she gives is gossip. Three days every week is that washerwoman with us, and she has two shillings a day, and eats enough to last her until she comes again the next week, and the house is in a steam and a warfare all three days, for they won't keep the doors shut, and the servants won't iron or fold, saying they have no time, and the things go to the mangling woman in the rough, and she folds them and charges double pay, and they come home as wet as water, and lie about for days, to be aired. Altogether, the clothes don't get put away till the Monday comes round again."

"I could not live in such a house!" exclaimed Annis. "We wash every other Tuesday, as I tell you, and by Thursday night the things are in the drawers, except what may want mending."

"You must have Aladdin's lamp. How do you manage it?"

"Management and system; with, of course, industry. Unless you can bring these to bear in your house, Augusta, it will be the same scene of confusion for ever. How uncomfortable it must make your husband."

"It makes him very cross, if you mean that. It is all confusion; no comfort and no peace."

Mrs. Courtenay had good cause to say so, and the confusion grew more confused as time went on. She made strenuous efforts, to the best of her ability, to remedy it, but succeed she could not. She constantly changed her servants, she made sudden plunges, by fits and starts, into the arts of cooking and contriving, but the only results were the spoiling of provisions, the waste of money, short commons, and ill-temper on all sides. Her husband took refuge again in his club for society, sheerly driven out of his house, which augmented expenses greatly.

V.

CAPTAIN COURTENAY sat one summer's morning in his stockings, the image of patience, looking at a very untidy breakfast cloth, and wishing he could also look at some breakfast; and two children were flying about the room, their hands full of bread-and-butter, which was being shared between their mouths and the carpet.

"It's too bad, Augusta," said he, as his wife came in: "twenty minutes past ten, and the breakfast not up. What's she at?"

"Leisurely eating her own breakfast, and the nurse with her," replied Mrs. Courtenay; "and the only answer I can get from her is that the kettle don't bile, and she ain't the fire to make it bile sooner than it will."

"That is always the excuse," sighed poor Captain Courtenay. "No breakfast, because there's no boiling water. What does she do in a morning? Be still can't you, Bob."

"She makes their own breakfast first, and then fills the kettle up again to boil for us. It's of no use talking to her: she is getting insolent already, and has been here but ten days. There's not a thing touched yet, and the kitchen is as she left it last night."

"I want my boots."

"There's not a boot or shoe cleaned. Why don't you put on your slippers?"

"Because I can't find them. Bob, where was it you saw my slippers?"

"In the oven, papa, all burnt up. We wondered what it was smelt so yesterday, and when Harriet looked in the oven, it was the slippers."

"Who put them there?" angrily demanded Mrs. Courtenay.

"I don't know," answered Bob. "Harriet said she didn't. Perhaps it was the boggy."

"Hallo!" cried out the Captain. "Who, sir?"

"The boggy, papa."

"Who tells you anything about the boggy?"

"Liza does. When Emily and Freddy won't go to sleep, 'Liza goes and calls the boggy. He made us scream so the other night, when he began to walk along the passage to fetch us."

"This is infamous!" uttered Captain Courtenay to his wife. "Nothing can be so bad as frightening children; they may never entirely overget its effects. Augusta, if any servant in the house dare to frighten my children she shall go out of it, so inquire into this. Why don't you see after things better?"

"I am seeing after things from morning till night, I think," retorted Mrs. Courtenay, who had not been downstairs ten minutes.

"And 'Liza'—what a pronunciation! Where do they pick it up?"

"Oh, from the servants," replied Mrs. Courtenay, apathetically. "Eliza herself speaks badly."

"I *cannot* make it out," exclaimed poor Captain Courtenay in an impassioned but helpless tone; "no other family seems to have such servants as we get. They do nothing; they are troublesome in all ways. Look at those two children: the buttons off their shoes, their socks dirty, their pinafores in holes, their hair uncombed! Bob; Emily; have you been washed this morning?"

"No," was the children's answer; "'Liza doesn't wash us till she takes us out in the day. It doesn't matter, she says."

The breakfast came in at last. And in discussing the merits of a capital ham (actually boiled well, by some mistake) the Captain grew pleasant and talkative.

"We had a snug party at the club last night, and a famous rubber. I cut in three times."

"Did you win?" inquired his wife.

"No," said the Captain, lugubriously. "I lost eleven points."

"Which was eleven shillings out of your pocket, and we can't afford it. You ought not to go there so much."

"Then you should make the house habitable."

"I don't make it uninhabitable, Robert: it's these wretches of servants."

"It's something," said the Captain. "By the way," he added, a recollection coming over him, "Ord has returned, and was there. He is coming to dine with us to-day."

"Oh! How could you ask him, Robert? Such a fuss and trouble as it will be."

"He asked himself; said he wanted to see you and the children. Nothing pleases you, Augusta. I go out too much, you say; and I am not to have a friend here: what am I to do? Sit in this room all day and all night, counting my fingers, while you storm at the ill-doings in the kitchen?"

"If my servants were worth anything I would not mind who came; but I suspect if we give Harriet two things to cook, she'll spoil one."

"Ord will take us as he finds us.—*Will* you children be quiet?—He knows it is not with us as it used to be, and he is a good fellow. A bit of fish and a joint: it's all we need have."

"No fish, no fish," hastily cried Mrs. Courtenay. "Remember that piece of salmon on Sunday: she sent it up in rags, on a bare dish, and all the scales on. I'll get some soup instead."

"Very well. Friday: it's not a very good day for choice, but I'll go out and cater for you, as I walk to the club. I am going directly after breakfast."

The result of the Captain's catering proved to be a piece of meat for soup, some lamb chops, a couple of fine ducks, green peas, asparagus, and young potatoes.

"The ducks must be stuffed, Harriet," observed Mrs. Courtenay, "and you must make a nice gravy for them."

"The gravy falls from 'em in roasting, don't it?" was Harriet's response.

"No," wrathfully returned Mrs. Courtenay; "don't you know better than that? It must be a made gravy, and a very good one."

"That'll make another saucepan on the fire," cried Harriet; "I must have the range out as wide as he'll go. It'll be a bother to get them feathers off the wings."

"What!" uttered Mrs. Courtenay, the remark causing her to look round hastily at the ducks. And then she saw that the inexperienced Captain had not ordered them to be made ready for dressing, but had bought and sent them home just as they were displayed in the poulterer's shop, part of their feathers on, and their heads hanging down.

"If ever I saw anything so stupid in all my life!" uttered she in her vexation. "And we don't know where they were bought, to send them back to be done. You must draw and truss them, Harriet."

"Never drew no animal in my life, and don't know how to do it," promptly returned Harriet.

Neither did Mrs. Courtenay know. And she foresaw the day would have some perplexity. Harriet suggested that Mrs. Brown should come in, and her mistress eagerly caught at it: so the children were left to the mercies of the stairs, like Mrs. Jellaby's Peepy, whilst Eliza was sent flying round the neighbourhood in search of Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown was the weekly washerwoman, and the two servants were on very good terms with her.

"Do you know how to prepare ducks for roasting?" was the anxious question Mrs. Courtenay put to her, when she returned with Eliza.

"Please, mem, I've seen 'em done. I can't say as I've had a deal of experience in such-like. But in the matter of scouring out of saucepans, and putting on of coal, and getting ready of plates and dishes, and scraping of potatoes, and shelling of peas, and all them odd jobs, there ain't nobody more quicker nor handier than me."

"Me and Mrs. Brown will manage well between us, ma'am," said Harriet. "Don't you stop here, please, for you'll only put us out. Now as I have got her to do the rough part, I be bound I'll do the fine."

Mrs. Courtenay was but too willing to accede to this advice. She hated the kitchen, and was always as thankful to get out of it as monks tell us poor erring souls are to get out of purgatory. So, with numerous charges and directions, the latter somewhat obscure, owing to her own inexperience, she left them to it, and did not go down again, passing a very agreeable day chatting with some acquaintance who called, and devouring a new novel.

Late in the afternoon she was surprised by a visit from her old maiden aunt, Miss Clementina Marsh, whom she had not seen for twelve months, and who had come to pass a few days with Mrs. Lance.

"Now you must stay and dine with me, Aunt Clem. I shall be glad of you, for Major Ord is coming, and you will make the fourth at table."

"I am agreeable," answered Aunt Clem. "Annis has sent me to ask you to her house to tea. Your mamma is there, and the Doctor is coming in the evening. I told Annis perhaps I should dine with you, and bring you in afterwards."

"Then come upstairs, and take your things off."

"Why, what's this?" uttered Aunt Clem, as she followed her niece to her bedroom. "Half-past four in the day, and your bed not made!"

"Oh! Harriet must have forgotten all about the upstairs work, and I'm sure I did. It must go now until after dinner. She is a fresh servant, aunt, and she knows little about cooking, and the woman that's helping her seems to know less. It is of no use seeking

for good cooks in servants-of-all-work, and they plague one's life out."

"Your nurse might do the bedrooms on busy days," said Aunt Clem.

"She might, but she doesn't. She is out now with the children. We have a key of the square, like Annis, and she takes the whole tribe there, and I get a quiet hour indoors."

They were to dine at five, early hours suiting Major Ord ; and a few minutes before the hour he and the Captain were heard to enter.

"Where are they going?" cried Augusta, in dismay. "Never upstairs, to wash their hands! My goodness me! can Robert be taking him up to that untidy room!"

"I should hope not," cried Aunt Clem : "it set my teeth of order on edge. There's no water, and no clean towels, and the hot-water jug, and razor, and shaving paper, are on the dressing-table, as your husband must have left them this morning, and the bed's just as you left it, and the room in a shocking litter altogether."

"They are gone in there! Robert's as senseless as an owl."

"I think it's someone else who's senseless," significantly retorted Aunt Clem. "How could he suppose the room had not been put to rights?"

"Hark! he is going for water to the nursery: Eliza keeps a pitcher there. What will Major Ord think of it all?"

"Some water," roared out the Captain; "there's none anywhere." Mrs. Courtenay rang the bell in a tremor, and Harriet was heard to go up.

The gentlemen came down. The Major was a pleasant man, much older than Captain Courtenay. He had plenty to tell Mrs. Courtenay of his sojourn abroad, and was in the midst of it, when a crash startled them from the kitchen. Something had gone.

"It sounds like a dish," laughed the Captain. "I hope our dinner was not in it."

Half-past five, and no signs of dinner. "Had you not better step and see what they are about?" cried out old-fashioned Aunt Clem to her niece.

"Oh, dear, no," coldly replied Augusta, too much the fine lady to do so in the sight of the Major. "They do not like to be interfered with."

A little more suspense, and then there came a timid knock to the room door.

"Come in."

"Please, gentlefolks, the dinner's a-waiting."

A cold shiver ran right through Mrs. Courtenay, as the Major held out his arm. For it occurred to her that she had said nothing to Harriet about who was to wait, and that voice was Mrs. Brown's. Could Harriet be sending that fright of a woman into the dining-room, and be stopping herself in the kitchen?

It was so. Screwing herself right behind the door, in her timidity, was humble Mrs. Brown. A pale, half-starved woman, with thin cheeks, and a black beard. A white apron of Harriet's was tied over the corners of her shawl and her patched gown, and a calico cap on her head, with a wide-spreading calico border that flew up as she moved. On the table, where the soup ought to have been, was a large plated dish-cover, completely covering what might be underneath, and resting on the tablecloth.

The Captain was speechless. He looked at Mrs. Brown, he looked at the cover, and he looked at his wife; and his wife would have been thankful not to look anywhere, but to sink through the floor or escape up the chimney. But they took their seats, Mrs. Brown drew up, and Aunt Clem volunteered grace, during the Captain's maze.

"Please, sir, am I to take off the kiver?"

"What is the meaning of this?" ejaculated the Captain, unable to contain himself any longer.

He probably meant Mrs. Brown. She thought otherwise. She lifted the "kiver," and disclosed a pie-dish containing the soup.

"Please, gentlefolks, we had a misfortin and broke the tureen: but it's only in three pieces, and can be riveted."

"Where's Harriet?" fiercely demanded Captain Courtenay.

"Please, sir, she's in the kitchen."

"Go down there, and send her up."

Mrs. Brown went down: but Mrs. Brown came up again.

"Please, gentlefolks, Harriet haven't a-cleaned of herself, and she's rather black. Please, as soon as she have dished up her ducks and chops, she says she'll wash her hands and face, and come."

Poor Mrs. Courtenay's face wanted washing—washing with some cooling lotion, to allay its fever heat. The Captain, helpless and crestfallen, served out the soup.

"What soup d'ye call this?" unceremoniously asked Aunt Clem at the first spoonful.

"Vermicelli soup," replied Mrs. Courtenay.

"Are you sure it is not made of coffee-berries?" returned Aunt Clem.

Whether the soup was made of water, or grease, or coffee-berries, no one could tell; but it was like a mixture of all three.

"If these are not coffee-berries, I never saw coffee-berries," persisted Aunt Clem, striking her spoon against sundry hard brown substances in her plate.

"They *are* coffee-berries," uttered the perplexed Captain.

"Please, gentlefolks, when Harriet was a-going to put in the vermisilli, she laid hold on the wrong paper, and the coffee-berries slipped in afore she found out her mistake," explained Mrs. Brown. "There was no time to fish 'em out again."

Apart from the coffee-berries, the soup was uneatable, and the spoons were laid down. "Take it away," said the Captain.

So Mrs. Brown carried away the pie-dish, and upon returning to remove the respective plates, she asked first, individually, "Please, had they done with it?"

"Never mind, Mrs. Courtenay," said Major Ord, good-humouredly; "misfortunes will happen, you know, in the best regulated family. I am an old traveller, and think nothing of them."

"Let us hope what's coming will be better," observed the Captain. "And we'll try the wine meanwhile, Major."

What was coming was tolerably long in coming, and Mrs. Courtenay grew hotter; but when it did come, it came in triumph. Harriet (in clean hands and face) bearing one dish, and Mrs. Brown another, and then both returned for the vegetables. The Major gently rubbed his hands, and the covers were removed.

"Lamb chops, and ducks, Major," said Mrs. Courtenay. "We made no stranger of you."

Which were the chops and which were the ducks? The dish before Mrs. Courtenay appeared to contain a mass of something as black as pitch. It was the chops, burnt to a coal. That was unpardonable of Harriet, for she could cook chops well. "I fear I cannot recommend the chops," said the miserable hostess, "but I think I can the ——"

Mrs. Courtenay came to a dead standstill. For upon looking towards the ducks she was struck by the extraordinary appearance they presented. The Captain was also gazing upon them with open mouth, and Aunt Clem was putting on her spectacles for a better view.

"What d'ye call them?" asked Aunt Clem. "They must be some foreign-shaped creatures from abroad."

"Harriet, are those the ducks?" uttered Mrs. Courtenay.

They were the ducks, but——

"If I don't believe they have been cooked with their heads on!" interrupted Aunt Clem. "And those things sticking up in the air are the beaks, and those four things are their eyes. My gracious, girl!" turning sharply round to Harriet, "did you ever see ducks cooked with their heads on before?"

The heads had been elevated, in an ingenious way, by means of upright skewers, with, as Aunt Clem expressed it, the beak sticking up. The feet were sticking up also, and spread out like fans. Harriet made her escape from the room.

"They won't eat the worse for it," said Major Ord, good-naturedly; and the Captain proceeded to carve them in the best manner he could, considering the array of skewers.

"Stuffing, Major?"

"If you please. It is called a vulgar taste, I believe, but I plead guilty to liking it."

"So do I, sir," said Aunt Clem, fixing her spectacles on the Major's face, "and I hope I never shall shrink from avowing it,

though the world does seem to be turning itself topsy-turvy, aping after what it calls refinement. A duck without the sage and onions wouldn't be a duck to me."

"Nor to me either, ma'am," said the Major.

"What very extraordinary stuffing!" uttered Aunt Clem, who was the first helped. "What's it made of?" continued she, sniffing and tasting.

"Made of!" hesitated the unhappy Mrs. Courtenay.

"Please, gentlefolks, it's chiefly made of suet, with thyme and pa'sley and crumbled bread and pepper and salt," spoke up Mrs. Brown.

"Fortune be good to us!" uttered Aunt Clem; "why, that's a veal stuffing. Ducks are stuffed with sage and onions."

"Please, gentlefolks, I telled Harriet I had seen 'em done with sage and inions, and she asked if I thought I knowed better than her."

"Will you have any of it, Major?" inquired the Captain, very quietly, in his mortification.

"Well, I don't know. How will it taste?"

The vegetables would have been very good had they been done, but the peas were as hard as the coffee-berries, and the grass, as Aunt Clem called it, had never been untied from the bundle in which it was bought. The young potatoes were in a mash. They were trying to make a dinner, when a divertissement occurred: the children, returning home from their walk, burst into the room, and, undisciplined and wilful as they were, could only be got rid of by force, the Captain being obliged to rise from table and assist in the ejection, whilst their screams frightened the visitor and deafened Aunt Clem. Poor Captain Courtenay almost swore a mental oath that he would run away to Africa with morning light.

"Oh, Aunt Clem! did ever anything go so unfortunately?" burst forth Mrs. Courtenay, in a shower of agonising tears, the moment she escaped from the dining-room. "What is to be done? What will Major Ord think of me, as the mistress of such a household—such housekeeping?"

"He will think you are an idiot," was the complimentary reply of Aunt Clem. "And so do I. I am going to Mrs. Lance now: it is late."

"I'll go with you," feverishly uttered Augusta. "I cannot stay here and face my husband and the Major at coffee."

"Caution the kitchen first, then, that they don't make the coffee of vermicelli," retorted Aunt Clem.

The peaceful home of her sister Annis, everything so quiet and orderly, was like a haven of rest, after her own, to Mrs. Courtenay. Dr. and Mrs. Marsh were there, but Mr. Lance had not returned from town, to the extreme surprise, if not alarm, of his wife, for he was always punctual. He soon came in, and Captain Courtenay with him, Major Ord having pleaded an evening engagement.

"We cannot go on like this," cried the Captain, suppressing his temper, as he looked at his sobbing wife, who had been detailing her grievances. "Where lies the fault; and what is to be done?"

"I think the fault lies in Augusta's incapacity for management," said Dr. Marsh, "and——"

"Oh, papa," she sobbed, "you don't know how I have tried to learn."

"And in your being unable, both of you, to accommodate yourselves to your reduced income," he added. "Augusta, child, you interrupted me. It is now four hundred a-year: but with all your discomfort you must be exceeding it."

"Four hundred won't cover our expenses this year," answered the Captain gloomily.

An ominous pause ensued: all present felt that such prospects were not bright ones. Aunt Clem broke it with a groan.

"Courtenay," observed the Doctor, "your club and your out-door luxuries must be incompatible with your means."

"I can't *live* without my club," interrupted the Captain, in earnest accents: "I must have some refuge from such a home as mine. And how to spend less in any one point than we do is more than I can tell; or Augusta either, I believe. Lance—Annis—why don't you teach us your secret?"

"Ah, we began at the right end," laughed Mr. Lance; "we economised at first, and it is now pleasant to us. We have had to practise self-denial patiently, to bear and forbear: but we have every wished-for comfort, and are happy."

"And you seem to live well, and you sometimes have a friend to dine with you, Lance," cried the Captain.

"To be sure. We do not exclude ourselves to ourselves like hermits."

"And he does not get soup made of grease and coffee-berries, and ducks roasted with their heads on, and stuffed with suet; and a she-animal in a beard and a shawl to wait upon him!" grumbled the Captain; which sent Mr. Lance into an explosion of laughter, for he had not heard of the mishaps of the day.

"It is of no use to mince the matter," cried Aunt Clem to the Captain and his wife, in her most uncompromising voice. "You two never ought to have married; you are not fitted by nature for a limited income, and turn its inconveniences into pleasures. What's more, you never will: you will go on in this miserable way for ever: and what will be the end of it, I don't know."

There was another pause: for Aunt Clem's words were true, and could not be gainsaid.

"I wish I had your occupation, Lance; or some other," exclaimed the Captain.

"I wish you had, indeed. An idle man needs to have a pocket full of money."

"But, Lance," mused the Captain, "you must have brought a strong will to bear down your old habits when you married Annis."

"Yes: and as strong a conscience," replied Mr. Lance, in low tones. "We both deliberated well upon what we were going to do, and we felt that we could go through with it, and succeed. It is difficult for men, brought up in expensive habits, as you and I were, Courtenay, to subdue them effectually, and become quiet members of society, men of reflection, good husbands and fathers, and remain so, without a struggle. Temptations to relapse beset on all sides; and few find out the right way, and acquire the inward strength to resist them. But if it is found, and acquired, the struggle soon ceases, and all the rest is easy."

"But you will never find it out, Captain," exclaimed Aunt Clem; "you and Augusta are of the wrong sort. Geoffry and Annis set out in the practise of self-denial: Annis in the shape of dress, visiting and gaiety, and Geoffry in that of out-door society. Annis, too, had the knack of domestic economy; Augusta had not; and there's a great deal in that. Some are born with it, and others seem as if they can never acquire it, try as they will."

"And what will you do for money, when your children want educating, Augusta?" asked Mrs. Marsh.

"I'm sure I don't know, mamma," was the helpless answer.

"We are putting by for that," said Annis.

"Putting by, out of three hundred a-year!" ejaculated Captain Courtenay.

"A little," she replied. "And the first year or two of our marriage we were enabled to put by really a great deal. But it causes me many an anxious thought, for I know how expensive education is."

"We shall weather it, Annis," said her husband.

"Yes," she sighed, "I hope we shall. And I believe we shall," she added, more cheerfully: "I never lose my trust, except in some wrong moment of despondency. Augusta has made me look on the dark side of things to-night."

"I know we shall," Mr. Lance replied, gazing at her with a meaning smile and a bright eye. "The half-yearly meeting of the institution took place to-day, and the governors had me before them, said some civil things to me, and raised my salary. It was what I never expected."

"Raised your salary!" she eagerly uttered.

"One hundred a-year, and intimated that by-and-by they might do more."

"Oh, Geoffry!" The tears rushed into her eyes in spite of herself. It was such a reward—for their patient perseverance *had* been attended with rubs and crosses. All fears for the future seemed at an end.

"Let me congratulate you, Lance," cried the Captain, heartily. "You can launch out a little more now."

"Launch out," returned Mr. Lance, with a glance at his wife, which she well understood. "Is it to be so, Annis?"

"I think not," she said, with a happy smile. "We are quite contented as we are, and will put it by for our children."

"You'll be geese if you don't," sharply cried Aunt Clem. "What could you want to launch out in, I should like to know, beyond what you have? A coach and four?"

"They have learnt the secret," said Dr. Marsh, nodding to the company. "Lance and Annis are happy on their three hundred a-year, for they confine their desires within their income: if you, Courtenay, and Augusta, came into five thousand a-year to-morrow, you would be sure to go beyond it. They conform their wants to their circumstances: you can't; and, as Aunt Clem says, you never will. And ——"

"Never," put in Aunt Clem.

"And there lies all the difference," concluded the Doctor.

There it does all lie. And the expediency, or in expediency, of frugal marriages can never be satisfactorily settled: for where one couple will go on and flourish, bravely surmounting their difficulties, another will come to repentance, poverty, and embarrassment, and a third live, in private, after the proverbially happy manner of a cat and dog. It does not lie altogether in the previous habits, or in the education, or in the disposition, still less in the previous station of life: it lies far more in the capacity of the husband and the wife, both, being able to adapt themselves cheerfully, and hopefully, and perseveringly to their circumstances: and few will be able to tell whether or not they can so adapt themselves, until they try it; whether the irrevocable step will turn out for better, or for worse.



A WEEK IN JERSEY.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC. ETC.



PORTALET BAY.

WE had heard a great deal of the spring charms of Jersey, and having a week or ten days to spare, determined to "go and see for ourselves." H. had not been to the Channel Islands at all ; I had ; and the one was as glad to revisit old scenes and renew old impressions as the other was to form new ones. It says much for Jersey that the pleasure of my second stay exceeded anything I had experienced in my first : partly, perhaps, because the earlier visit had been paid in autumn, when the leaves are falling and the world is sad. In this later visit we were in the midst of all the exquisite love-

liness and exhilaration of reviving nature.

We left London one bright afternoon in May. Even the skies of the Metropolis were blue, and Waterloo Station was not quite so depressing as usual. In due time we reached Southampton ; and again could not quite decide whether it is one of the ugliest places in England, or rather picturesque and interesting. On the whole, the ugliness seems to predominate.

Our boat left at ten o'clock. The year being young, the season early, we anticipated no difficulty in regard to accommodation. Yet

we found every private cabin taken, and the public saloon likely to be crowded. This was a check to our hitherto uninterrupted flow of spirits. H. looked at me rather blankly. The look said plainly: "Let us delay our journey until to-morrow." But delays are dangerous, and the secret of success in life is to overcome obstacles. A whole night spent in a crowded saloon, with a table groaning under the weight of refreshments that probably we should presently be wishing might be "funeral baked meats," was out of the question. Finally, the captain came to our rescue, and very kindly placed his own cabin at our disposal. Nothing could have been better; we now rejoiced in the best, quietest, most airy quarters on board the good ship.

We started at ten. The night was dark, though the stars shone brilliantly. As we loosed our moorings, it seemed a hopeless task to find a passage through the maze of shipping that surrounded us. Lights flashed and gleamed from all quarters, and voices shouted and raved as if in the last stage of desperation. But foot by foot, and yard by yard, our pathway seemed to clear and open out, and we glided away into broader waters as easily and safely as if we had been all the time in mid-ocean.

We passed out of Southampton Water. The low shores of the Isle of Wight loomed out in the darkness, a long-drawn black line against the still darker background of the sky. This on our right. On our left, the shores of the mainland, with its innumerable lights, gave token of life and movement and the habitations of man. Ahead, the broad waters of the Channel bid us advance. We turned in before long, and the night passed in a happy oblivion, for which we were grateful—doubly grateful to the captain, without whose kindly aid the hours would have passed in misery. As we woke simultaneously the next morning: no doubt by the action of that mesmeric affinity which causes mind to influence mind: a mysterious power which certainly exists, though as yet so little understood: as we woke, I say, and gazed at each other inquiringly, each saw there was no heartrending tale of agony and woe to confess to. Our berths were at right angles to each other, and H., who is six feet in his stockings, had passed the night mysteriously curled up like a marmoset or a squirrel. I, on the other hand, had profited by the circumstance which has so often served a man on the battle-field, not only of life but of war, of being a head shorter than his next-door neighbour.

We looked out and found that we were in sight of land and rocks. A fresh, exhilarating breeze was blowing, and before long we stood on the bridge, which we shared with the officers on duty. In answer to a magic knob in the cabin, the steward brought us tea, and we felt, like Alexander, eager for a new world to conquer.

We steamed down the coast of Jersey, and once more were struck by all its diversity of outline and beauty of colouring. The

crescent bays, small and lovely, opened up one after another. The water was exquisitely green and transparent. The sun had risen in splendour, and his broad beams flashed and sparkled around. Every moment the air seemed to grow softer and warmer ; the skies were blue and cloudless. The sense of exhilaration made life a paradise for the moment.

Presently the harbour of St. Heliers opened up ; we passed the grey, disused fortress of Elizabeth Castle, which stands out so picturesquely from the mainland—an island at high water, a continent when the tide is low. The lofty granite rock on which Fort Regent was built, at the cost of a million of money, towered above us ; passing between the piers, we drew up alongside the quay, and came to an anchor.

St. Heliers seemed full of animation. Of all the little settlements in these islands, it is the busiest and most enterprising, the most lively and enlivening. At this early period of the year, many places would have looked dull and lifeless. We had expected that Jersey would be quiet and deserted, and were not a little disappointed at the "evidence of a great crowd," which met us on all sides ; but in the end we found that the crowd scattered, and that we were to have as much solitude in the island as the most exacting misanthrope could desire.

The "great crowd" in part consisted of vehicles. The quays were lined with them. If a whole fleet of vessels had been expected, greater preparation need not have been made. Every inn and hotel in the place—and in Jersey their name is legion—must have turned out all its omnibuses and flys for the occasion. Besides this, carts and waggons were in great force, as if Jersey, like Paris, had opened an exhibition, and was expecting cargoes from the outer world. As we walked along the quays towards the hotel—the omnibus taking charge of our traps—they passed us one after the other in a procession that we thought would never end. Four-fifths of them were empty, and had had their trouble for their pains of coming down ; but "Hope springs eternal in the human breast ;" and what did not happen yesterday may happen to-morrow. It is fortunate that human nature is so constituted, or we should never get through the world.

We passed away from the quays, which are so extensive as to form quite a walk. The streets of the town were quiet and deserted. It was only eight o'clock, and the town seemed sleeping yet ; for it was Sunday morning, and the shops were closed. There was hardly a creature to be seen, and we had to trust to memory in finding our way to our destination.

This destination was Bree's Stopford Hotel, and it is impossible to proceed with our narrative without recording that we have seldom found ourselves more happy and comfortable than we were here.

There was not a fault to find with the whole arrangement of the

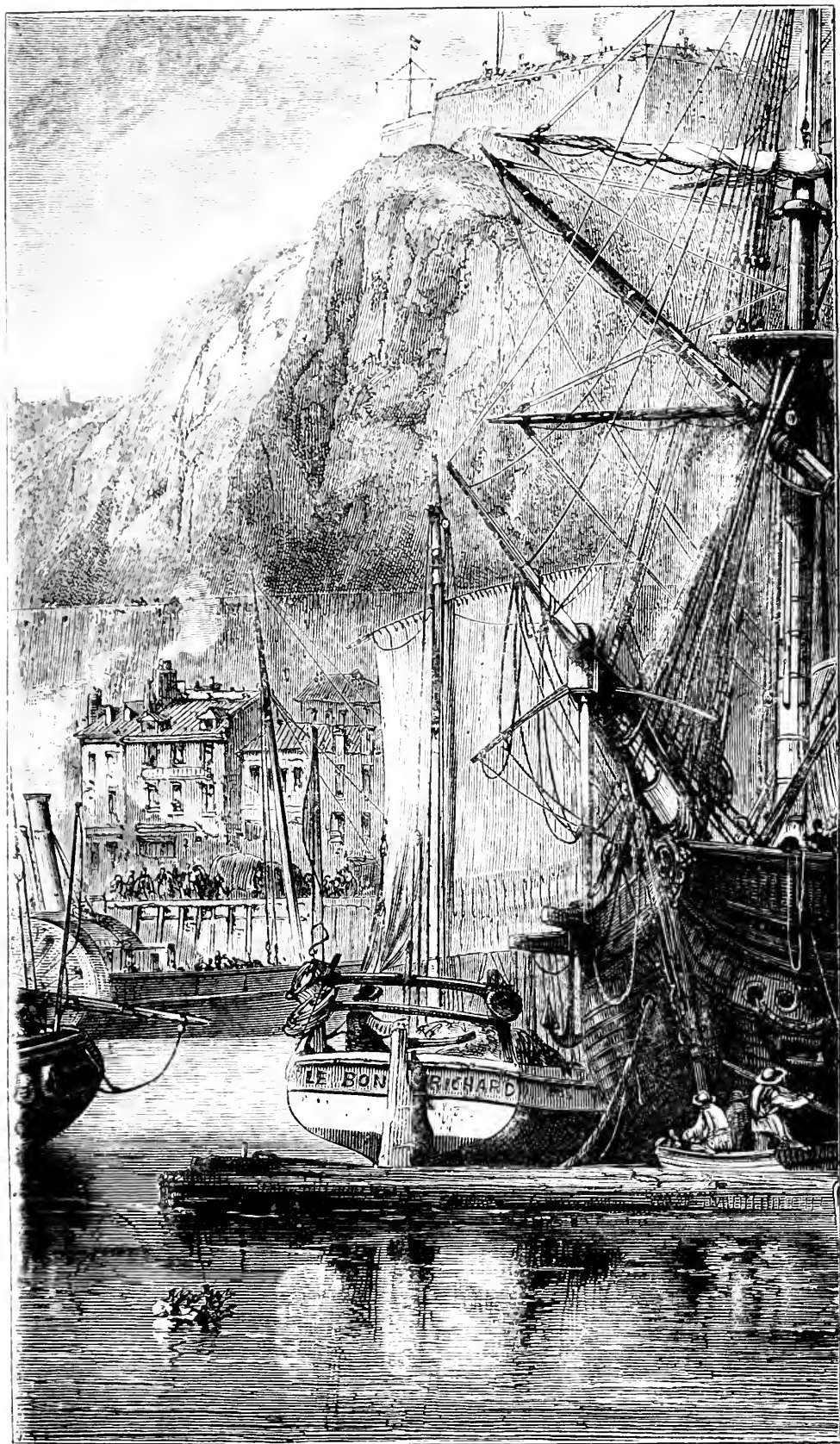
inn, excepting that Mr. Bree's charges are too moderate for all the liberality he bestows upon his guests. This is a rare and exceptional virtue in these days. The appointment of the house was excellent, and so was the cuisine; the table d'hôte was abundant, and the menu was always drawn up with judgment. The delicious hot rolls and fresh butter supplied at breakfast were alone worth a visit to Jersey; whilst the snow-white damask and the well-kept silver added no little to one's serenity of mind. Mr. Bree, himself, was the most generous and attentive of hosts. The same servants we had found five years ago were still here, which says much for the master of an establishment in which there must inevitably be much to try the temperament. If we did not recognise them, they recognised us, and received us quite as if we had been an old habitué of the place.

We have gone a little out of our way to bestow praise where it is so justly deserved, for exceptional merit should meet with exceptional treatment. We have found nothing better in any first-rate hotel in London or on the Continent than we found at Bree's Stopford Hotel in Jersey, whilst the charges were less than a third of what we have often paid elsewhere. Compare them, for instance, with the Hôtel Continental in Paris, where two friends recently stayed. Arriving at six in the evening, and leaving at eleven the next day, their rooms perched on the fifth floor, their bill came to between eighty and ninety francs. Moderation in these days is lost sight of, and extortion is the rule.

So it is clear that anyone who desires a very happy and healthful holiday, which will not greatly diminish the weight of his purse, need go no further than this little island of Jersey, and place himself under the care of Mr. Bree.

We had expected to find the hotel empty, or very nearly so, at this early season, but between fifty and sixty people sat down to table d'hôte. Many of those present had come from the Midland and Northern Counties of England, tempted across the Channel by the exceptional beauty of the weather. It was an old-fashioned May; one the poets have sung of from time immemorial, but which seems to have vanished with the light of other days. Our host told us that he himself was surprised at the number of his guests; never before at that season of the year had he mustered so strong a party.

He was, however, equal to the occasion. Everything went on as quietly and smoothly as clockwork; and we two in our little sitting-room were as full of repose as if the large public drawing-room not far off had not been full of a crowd of visitors, who were all apparently as happy as the day was long. If the world only knew half the charm of Jersey in the "Merrie Month of May," it would flock to it, not in tens or fifties, but in hundreds. One of the given conditions must of course be that it is an old-fashioned May, with balmy air, and blue skies, and brilliant sunshine. A May in which



HARBOUR AND FORT REGENT.

there is no east wind. Such a May we had in this year of grace 1889.

That first morning, being Sunday, we went to the parish church, where we heard the English Liturgy read in French. It was impossible to avoid a comparison, or to feel how much it lost in beauty, dignity and grandeur by the translation. The old Dean was dead and a new Dean reigned in his stead. The service is in French in the morning, in English in the afternoon. The church itself is of the 14th century, but has been much restored, and possesses no great feature of interest.

The chief charm of Jersey lies in the sylvan beauty of the island ; its numerous small excursions and exquisite drives ; the loveliness of its bays, which curve round in such perfect crescents, where the water surges to and fro and ebbs and flows in gentle ripples over the whitest, most sparkling sand and shore. The water itself is clear and transparent ; of that pale aqua-marine which enables you to see the bottom even of a great depth ; which makes you long to become a fish, that you might rejoice in a new sensation. The channel round about Jersey has often been painted, but its beauties can never be realized on canvas. We remember once seeing a picture of Brett's of Jersey rocks, wherein the water was represented in the vivid colours that Brett delights in. We thought it exaggerated, but when we came to see it for ourselves, we confessed that he had kept his tones carefully within bounds.

And this experience holds good in many other instances. Nature has so many phases that in seeing a startling sunrise or sunset on canvas, the gloomy depths of a storm, the leaden dulness of a November sky, the most brilliant colours of spring, or the most gorgeous tones of autumn, it is dangerous to say that anything is exaggerated. The most purple haze on distant hills that ever artist painted is possible in nature, and may be seen at some time or other ; the softest light in the sky equally with the most vivid and glowing. And the exceptional in nature is worthy of record quite as much as the exceptional in man.

But it is not given to every one to discover nature in her exceptional moods and phases. Even in artists there are degrees of appreciation. With many the faculty has never been properly cultivated, and the eyes are withheld from beholding the beauties that are there. To too many

“ A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”

This is true of a very large proportion of mankind ; and perhaps it is partly due to the fact that as one of the charms of nature at her best and highest is a singular purity, refinement, and repose, she is only in perfect harmony with those whose lives are characterized by these virtues.

Again, imagination is also necessary to thoroughly appreciate nature and be in perfect harmony with her. It was Turner's imagination that enabled him to see nature as few can see her. His apparent exaggerations are not really exaggerations at all. We have most of us frequently seen phases that on canvas would have been declared impossible, and that even Turner never approached; but they invariably recall him to memory, and cause one to have only a higher reverence for a genius that has never been equalled and probably never will be.

It is possible to see Jersey and all its beauties in more ways than one.

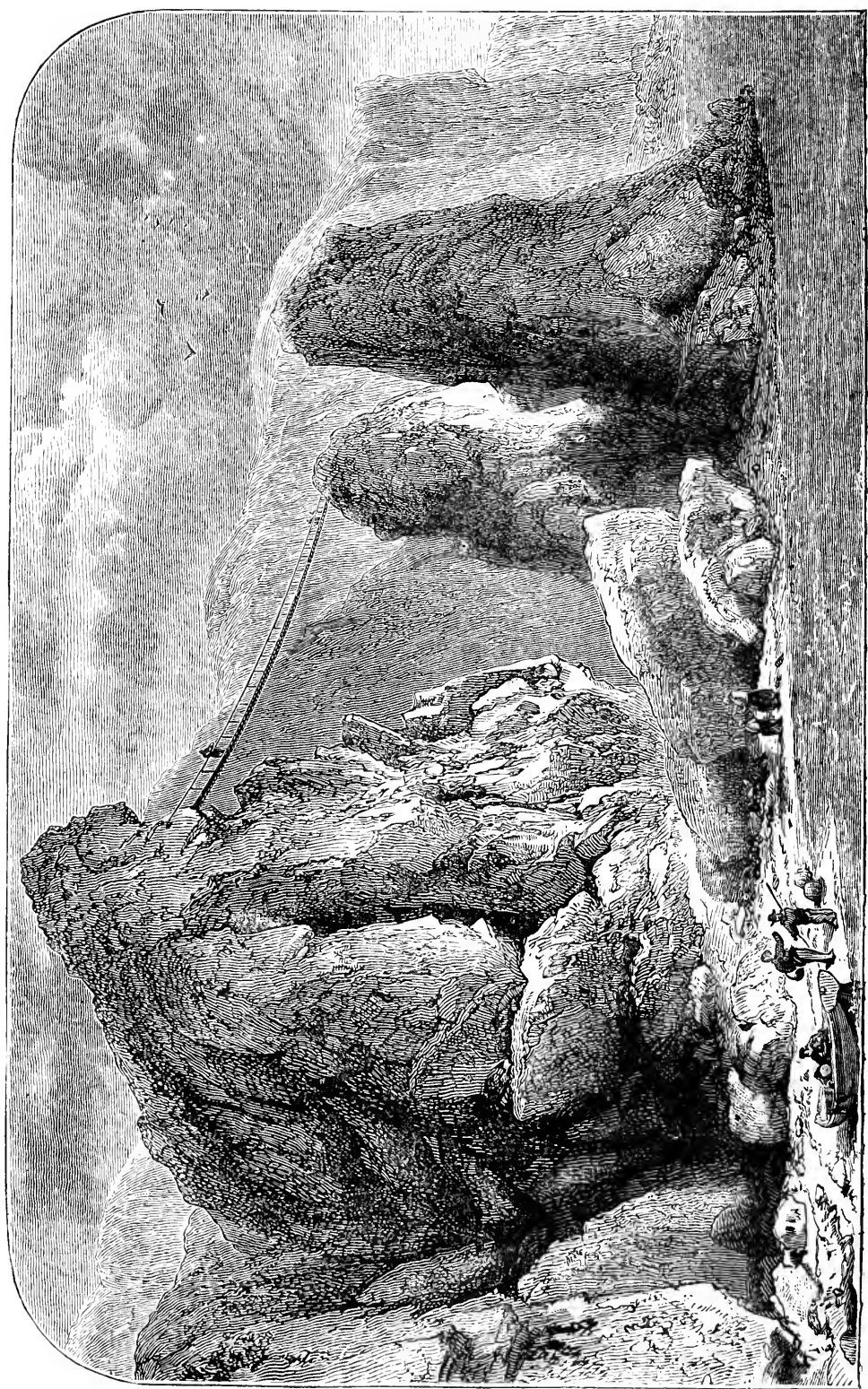
For those who are sociably inclined, and, like the elephants, prefer to travel in droves, or do not wish to tax their purse-strings too heavily, nothing can be better or pleasanter than the char-a-bancs, which show you the island in a certain number of days. They are huge vehicles drawn by four horses, holding some thirty to forty people. You mount by ladders, and are perched so high in the air that as you drive you may see over the tallest hedge, and look very much down upon the people you pass on the road.

And for those who, like ourselves, prefer a quieter life, there are carriages of every description to be hired at a very moderate rate. We safely left the arrangement of all this to Mr. Bree, who provided us with a comfortable Victoria, a pair of strong little horses, and a capital coachman who knew every inch of the island, all its secrets and all its legends; and who was not above giving us his opinion upon the best points for photographing, especially when that opinion differed from ours.

For we had each brought a camera, for the sake of amusement and carrying away pleasant recollections. To the initiated we may observe that the one was a half-plate, the other a detective instantaneous camera, which took people "quite unknown," so that each went his way—the one unconscious of having been victimised, the other with a comfortable feeling of possessing a type of humanity, it might be in some ludicrous posture, or in the profound depths of contemplation; the "deep furrow of thought," the far-off gaze, faithfully given. The amusement to be derived from these detective cameras is endless; every action is recorded, and life and movement are placed before you; nothing is wanting but the voice, at which photography for the present draws the line. But when people travel with M. Bernier at the rate of one hundred and twenty-four an hour, it may be that even photographs will converse. Human beings will scarcely have time to do so.

Our first drive in Jersey was also one of the most beautiful. The coachman dashed through the town and woke the echoes of the quiet streets. Then sweeping round by the sea shore, the full stretch of St. Aubyn's Bay opened up to us.

It was a brilliant afternoon. The sea was intensely beautiful, and



GRÈVE DE LECQ.



THE PATERNOSTERS.

the sunlight was reflected in a myriad jewels upon the water. Down the full curve of the bay you might trace the tide, breaking in long, white, clear lines upon the sparkling sand. Even the gloomy fortress of St. Elizabeth, which knew its best days in the time of the Virgin Queen, looked bright, picturesque and dignified, worthy its tradition. The tide was high, and it was now surrounded by the shimmering water, and small white-winged boats flitting about the bay lent their enchantment to the scene. Just beyond the Castle were the ruins of the Hermitage, of far greater antiquity than the Castle itself, and of more romantic interest. It is rudely constructed of small stones, and here St. Helier is said to have been murdered by Norman pirates.

Passing beyond all this, and leaving behind us the small houses that here and there enliven the bay, if they do not add to its beauty, we turned our backs upon the sea, and entered Mill-brook Valley.

It is perhaps the most beautiful valley in Jersey, fertile, laughing, and luxuriant. To our left were high banks covered with ferns and wild flowers, above which stretched green and wooded slopes. On our right the valley widened. Rich green pastures in which the famous cows grazed and found a home alternated with orchards, whose trees were a perfect wealth of dazzling blossom. Beneath, the green grass was strewn with fallen petals, beautiful and delicate as butterflies' wings. Here and there were cottages covered with creepers and roses. Fuchsia trees grew high, and gorgeous geraniums and magnificent rhododendrons seemed to turn the very atmosphere into a kaleidoscope of colouring. Beyond the pastures and orchards and cottages—the latter were very few and far between—the hills again arose in wooded slopes, the homes of countless ferns and wild flowers. A small stream ran through the valley, which, if it did not "make music as it flowed," at least reflected the blue sky above, and where, like Narcissus, you might behold the fair beauty of your countenance, and, if you pleased, fall in love with it, and be turned into a daffodil, to inhabit for ever after the beautiful and surrounding woods. Daffodils there were in abundance, but whether, like Narcissus, they had been transformed, we could not tell. They did not speak, but they were lovely, and seeing them, we loved them as they were.

Presently we came to a deserted mill ; deserted, perhaps, only for the day ; and there was a romantic pool, which reflected everything around ; and a beautiful old water-wheel, as picturesque as water-wheel can be in an enchanted valley ; and a tall factory chimney rose up beyond, hideous and aggressive, and terribly out of place. What it meant we knew not, and would not enquire.

We ascended to higher ground, and presently reached the sea on the northern side of the island. It is one of the charms of Jersey, that you are ever coming unexpectedly upon the sea. The beauties of land and water are so intermingled that you can scarcely separate the one from the other. And yet you have each to perfection. It is

seldom that in so small an island you find so much richness and luxuriance of vegetation. The little valleys are perfect in their way. The trees are well-grown, the flowers are brilliant and abundant ; the grass of the meadows is rich and lawn-like. No wonder the cows yield such rich butter and milk ; and that the cattle generally are excellent.

On the other hand, the coast scenery is singularly beautiful and diversified. Point after point stretches out to the sea. Rocks rise out of the water in all directions, and the waves for ever dash about them in white foaming eddies, throwing upward their feathery spray. The wild birds perch upon the points, and fly, and scream, and clang with that peculiar sound that is so suggestive of freedom and solitude and grandeur, and thrills one through and through, no matter how or when we hear it.

We came out upon Bonne Nuit Bay, where the beach was pebbly and the low reefs ran out to a point, and the ever restless and moving water broke and surged over the smooth surface. For a time we followed the coast, and traced the broken outlines in all their wild beauty. The sea air blew up fresh and invigorating, the atmosphere itself was soft, and clear, and radiant, and the sun travelling westward touched all with gold.

We turned once more inland, occasionally passing an old church, or a small settlement of houses, but meeting with nothing so beautiful and luxuriant as the Mill-brook Valley.

One of our pleasantest drives was to St. Brelade's Bay, on the south side of the island, and beyond St. Aubyn's Bay. The St. Brelade's Bay Hotel was delightfully situated close to the water, and next to Bree's Stopford Hotel is the best managed and the most reasonable hotel in Jersey. We found the table in the dining-room spread sumptuously with fresh lobsters and every description of meat and poultry : everything was excellently served ; and here, too, we were surprised at the moderation of the charge. We could quite imagine, as our good and intelligent host informed us, that people would often come and stay here weeks together. Both summer and winter, the quarters must be wonderfully pleasant.

The place to-day was exceedingly quiet and solitary. We had it to ourselves, with the exception of an eccentric old couple : an antiquated Darby and Joan, who had evidently trodden life's stormy pathway together, and shared each other's joys and sorrows. In this instance the sorrows seemed to have predominated. In both countenances there was that sad, subdued, weather-beaten expression which is so pathetic, goes so straight to the heart, and is so seldom seen excepting where the life has been careworn and heavy-laden. These two had now evidently very nearly arrived at the end of their journey. They might have come out of Noah's Ark, both as to age and attire. The one was in clerical garb of some remote period ; the other wore the coal-scuttle bonnet that was fashionable in the days

of our grandmothers. They were staying at the inn ; had been there some time ; and told us how admirable they found it ; so out of the world, yet so civilized and well-appointed.

Close to the inn, to the right, was the old Parish Church, the oldest in the island, dating from the 12th century. The sea has here encroached upon the coast, and the waves now wash the very walls of the building and beat against its foundations, as if they would destroy by their power and might what time has spared.

It is a lovely view as you stand and gaze seawards over the shallow precipice. The seagulls are flying about, clanging and screaming : they settle for a moment upon the rocks, upon the points of the church and the old tower, only to rise again on swifter wing and with louder cry. The rocks shelve down far into the water, and the restless tide breaks over them night and day, summer and winter, with perpetual motion. They are brown and slippery ; and here and there a deep, dark, purple spot betrays hidden rocks below the shimmering surface. The bay sweeps round in a wide curve, and the sea ebbs and flows over the white sand with a soothing, lulling sound to those who may be lying upon the shore. In the distance Fret Point looms out, completing the crescent of the bay.

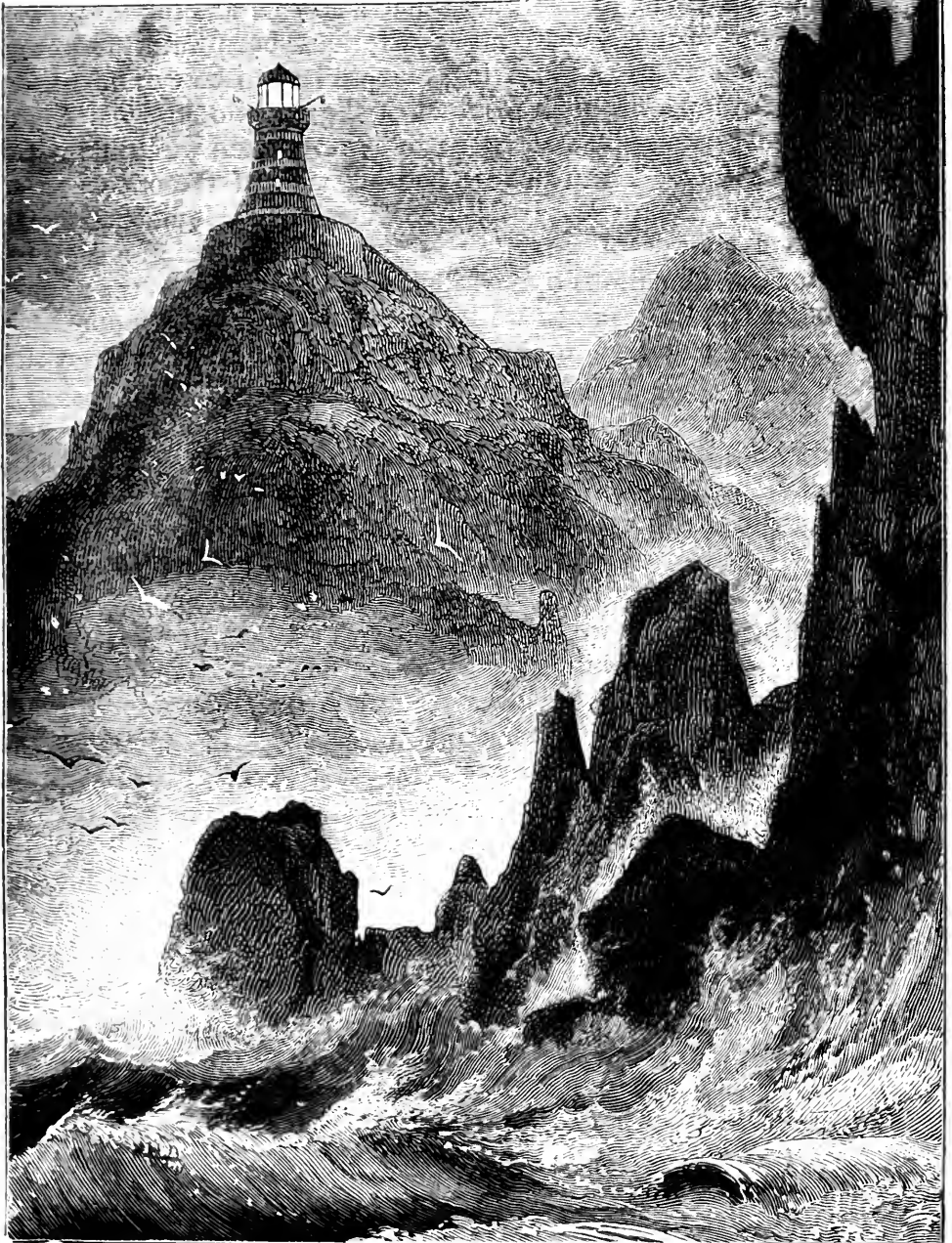
Behind us small birds are singing in the trees which surround a picturesque parsonage. No doubt they have built in all the nooks and hollows of the church, year in, year out, from time immemorial. The church itself is very small, but interesting, and over the west doorway a singular gargoyle stretches outwards, as if challenging evil spirits. A building close by, no larger than a mortuary, but looking older and quainter than the church itself, is called the Fishermen's Chapel ; and here, probably, the women of the neighbourhood come sometimes to pray for those belonging to them at sea, who risk their lives for their daily bread, and to provide "wholesome farin'" for the world at large.

We had time to take in and contemplate all this that lovely May day ; for we made St. Brelade's Bay our mid-day halting place, so that the horses, like ourselves, might have rest and refreshment. In our subsequent halts in the different parts of the island on other days we never found a pleasanter spot, and never an inn a tithe as comfortable.

We were fortunate, too, in having it to ourselves. Only once at the mid-day rest did we happen to come across the two or three char-a-bancs and small crowd of excursionists that were perambulating the island in flocks and herds. No doubt they found their mode of travelling very exhilarating ; the speed of four horses is much more enlivening than that of two ; but our quiet hours and our solitary drives *à deux* infinitely added to the charm of our own sojourn.

It was satisfactory also to be able to stop the carriage whenever we came upon a spot that was unusually picturesque, or "composed well" as a picture. Over and over again we took photographs of

places that probably had never been photographed before. The island is full of these lovely and exquisite scenes; surprises reserved by nature; for they come upon you in the most unexpected manner. A sudden turn in the road opens out a charming valley, where, perhaps, you anticipated nothing but a barren tract; or gaining a height, the full glory of



THE CORBIÈRES.

the shimmering sea bursts upon your dazzled vision. Our driver was never so happy as when on any of these occasions he and his carriage and his cattle came in as an accompaniment; and if a charming landscape presented itself towards the end of the day, when our last plate had been taken, his distress was genuine.

Two of our days stand out perhaps above all others. On the one day we left the carriage for a time, and went down a narrow barren valley. A few sheep browsed upon the rugged sides. A narrow stream ran towards the sea. The tone of the hills was sad and sombre. Everything of a smiling aspect seemed to have fled away. No creature, human or animal, crossed our path.

Presently we came to the end. Far below us was the sea. The land jutted out in rocks, sharp and precipitous, beautiful in form and outline. It was steep and shelving, and we had to be careful of our foothold. An immense rock rose out of the midst of the water, and we could only gain it by a steep pathway not much wider than the sole of one's foot. From this we had full view of the one waterfall of which Jersey is proud. It fell from a considerable height, finally landing in a shower of spray in the small cauldron formed by the circling rocks. A curious optical illusion, which I had never noticed in any other fall, was that, as we looked at the water going down, the rock beside it appeared to be ascending. We both noticed the strange effect.

This was one of the most striking parts of the island. The view was wild and grand. The sea birds flew about glinting in the sunshine. The water dashed and plashed and roared in the cauldron, and about the rocks, as if angry that any bounds should be imposed upon it. And we, perched upon the pinnacle of the rock, seemed scarcely to have any pathway wherewith to return to land.

A little beyond this we came to what was called the Devil's Coal Hole, or cauldron, or kitchen; some portion, at any rate, of the domestic department of the lower regions. Here we passed through a shed or shanty, where refreshments in the shape of stale buns and lemonade—and probably stronger waters—were dispensed by a smiling handmaiden, who took charge of our cameras. Next we descended a suicidal flight of steps until we reached the bottom of a chasm. We were rewarded for our pains by an immense hole in the rock, worn smooth by the action of the water, through which a small boat might have passed out to the open sea: the sort of phenomenon that in other places is usually called a Devil's post-office or a Giant's leg. We were not unusually impressed, but we had paid our fee and done our duty, and so departed with easy consciences.

A short walk round the coast, an upward climb over sloping hills, and at the appointed place we found our driver awaiting us with admirable patience.

The other day referred to included our visit to Mont Orgeuil Castle and the little harbour of Gorey. The castle is a magnificent

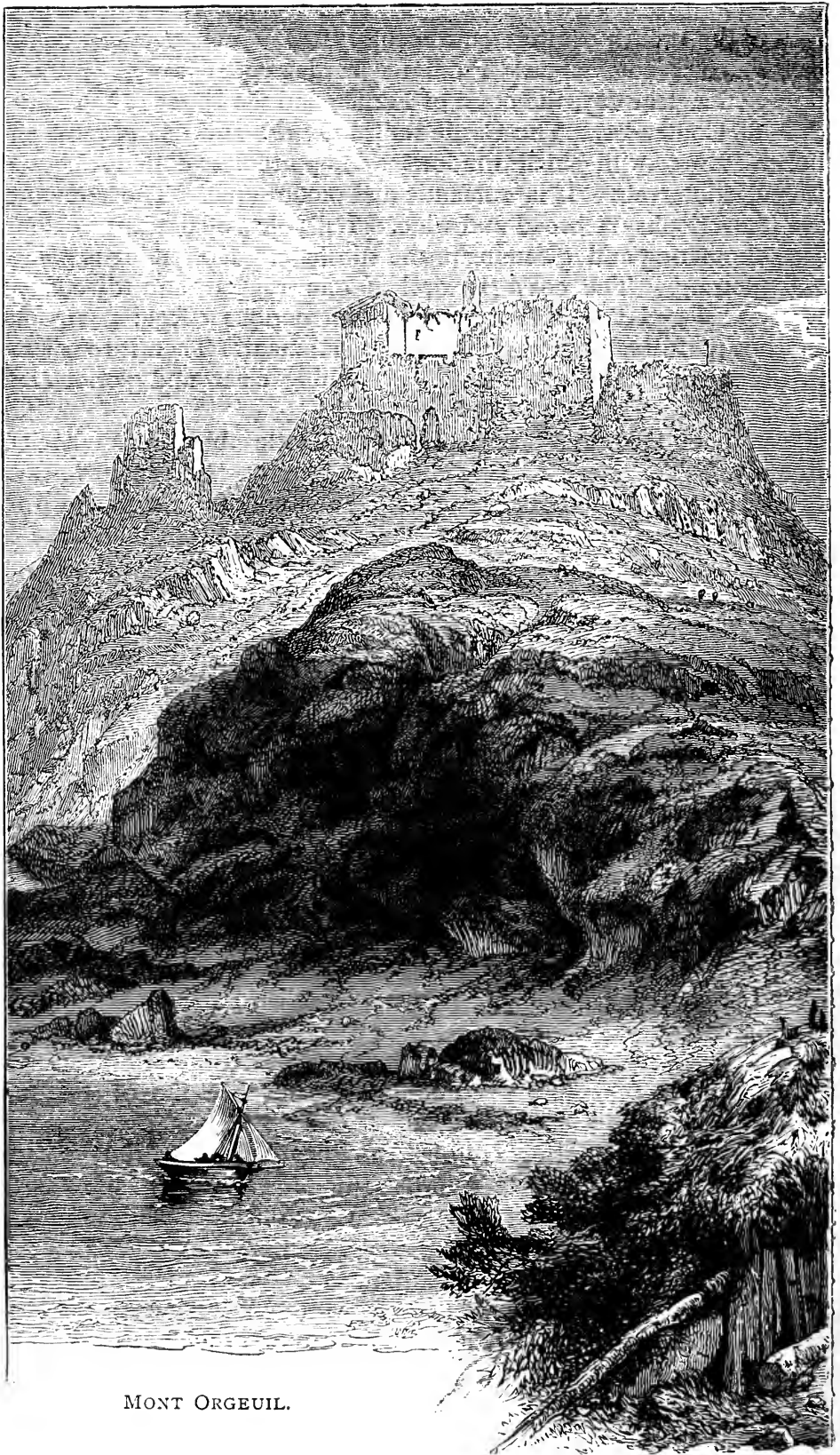
ruin of the twelfth or thirteenth century. It stands overlooking the sea, which it commands. From its battlemented towers you may trace, on a clear day, the coast of France and the spires of the Cathedral of Coutances. The Castle walls are grey and hoary, moss and lichen-grown, with small windows and portholes dotted about at irregular intervals. It is romantic and picturesque. The stretch of sea it overlooks is broad and wide. Its pale opalescent colours are shimmering and gleaming in the sunshine. Everything is golden and glowing. The coast is broken and rugged and diversified. Every now and then a mist rolls up with curious effect: rises white and opaque, obscuring everything for the moment. Then it rolls away "as a vapour," and again leaves everything clear and glorious and grand.

You pass into the precincts of the Castle through an ancient archway. The steps leading upwards are rugged, the passage is narrow, the walls are thick and solid. It would form a prison from which there would be small chance of escape. More than once in days gone by, an unhappy captive has thrown himself from the tower, hoping for freedom, but has only perished in the vain attempt. A small outwork, very fine and interesting, is called Cæsar's Fort, though history does not say whether Cæsar ever had anything to do with it. King John is said to have enlarged the fortifications; and Charles II. inhabited the Castle when he took refuge in Jersey. For even then, as now, Jersey seems to have been a shelter for the destitute.

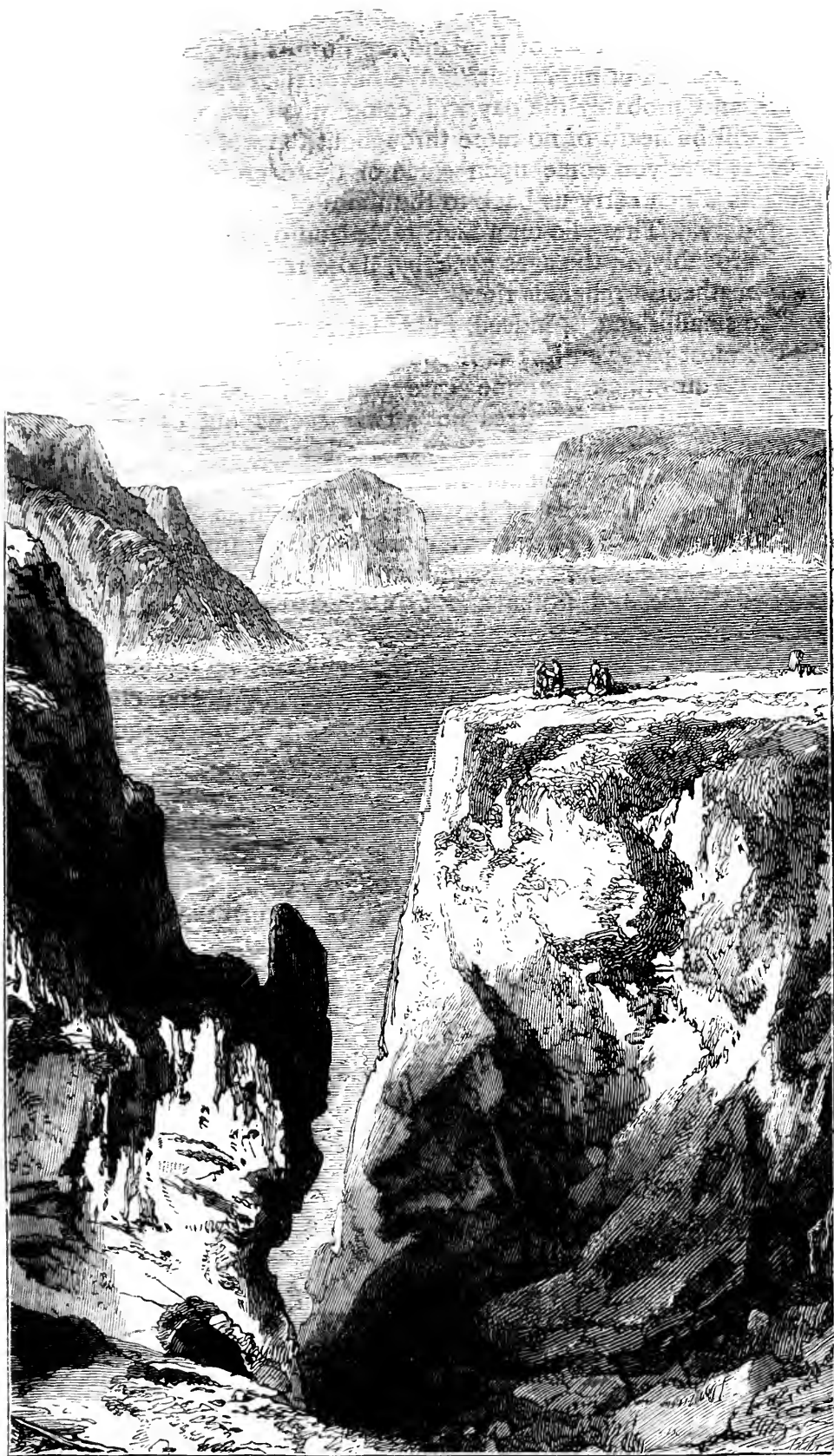
One of the most picturesque things in the island is the small village and harbour of Gorey, lying immediately under the very shadow of the Castle. It is so far down that everything from this distance looks small and dwarfed. It is a little harbour of refuge, and is crowded with fishing boats. The small stone pier goes round in a semicircle, and on the miniature quay waggons are busily at work loading hay from barges alongside. We talk to the men, but they speak a patois which, as far as language is concerned, is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. We have great difficulty in making each other mutually understood, but in spite of this we part mutually good friends.

Amongst the small houses lining the quay is the inn, but we cannot say as much for it as we did for the inn at St. Brelade's Bay. Nor is the landlady as civil and attentive as our host of the former. But we are shown into an upper room, which is a new and excellent dining-room, entirely built of pitch pine, or some equally white and cheerful wood; and here we are served with delicious lobsters, and a baron of beef which would tempt the most unwary appetite.

Far above the little village, Mont Orgeuil rears its dignified head. The sight of it has struck terror to many a heart in days gone by; but those days are over. It has been left to peace and repose for many an age; its frowns have softened; its rugged sides have



MONT ORGEUIL.



PONT DE MOULIN.

smoothed. The arms of England are now its insignia, and for motto it bears "*Dieu et mon droit.*" We have fallen upon more peaceful times, and probably the day will come when wars and rumours of wars will be heard of no more throughout the world.

Near here you come upon some of those curious and interesting remains which carry us back to the times of the Druids, and are full of mystery. These lie on a high table-land overlooking the sea, and here, probably, in the ages gone by, those remote people celebrated their heathenish religious rites.

The small island is, indeed, full of interest. It is so well kept that for the most part you feel as if you were driving through some private property on which extreme care was bestowed. The roads are excellent, and in the hedges not a twig seems out of place. You come upon dry walls, but they are all in order—not a stone is wanting. The lanes abound in ferns and wild flowers.

One of the charms of Jersey is its smallness. The bays are numerous, and each one seems more beautiful than the other. At Grève de Lecq you have magnificent rocks; deep gullies in which the sea dashes and froths and foams; where the winds roar on a winter's night, and the storm seems to threaten the very foundations of the earth. The coast, too, is well guarded by lighthouses, and amongst these, the Corbières are singularly grand and picturesque. At low water you can walk across the rocky pathway to them, mount the steep ascent, and climb to the top of the lighthouse.

Here the view of land and water is magnificent. The island stretches out before you. Far down on either side you trace the rugged coast, the wild outlines. The sea plashes around. To-day it is calm, and there are pools all about the rocks, in which you may gather beautiful specimens of seaweed, and disturb the limpets, if you are cruelly and mischievously inclined. But there are other days, when the winds roar and the sea dashes mightily, and the water sweeps right over the lighthouse, which seems to tremble and shiver at the fury of the storm. The keepers cannot hear each other speak, and for the time being all communication with the shore is interrupted. The sea-birds alone defy the elements, and fly and wheel about, and add their wild clang to the surrounding rush and roar. The whole scene is in the highest degree sublime.

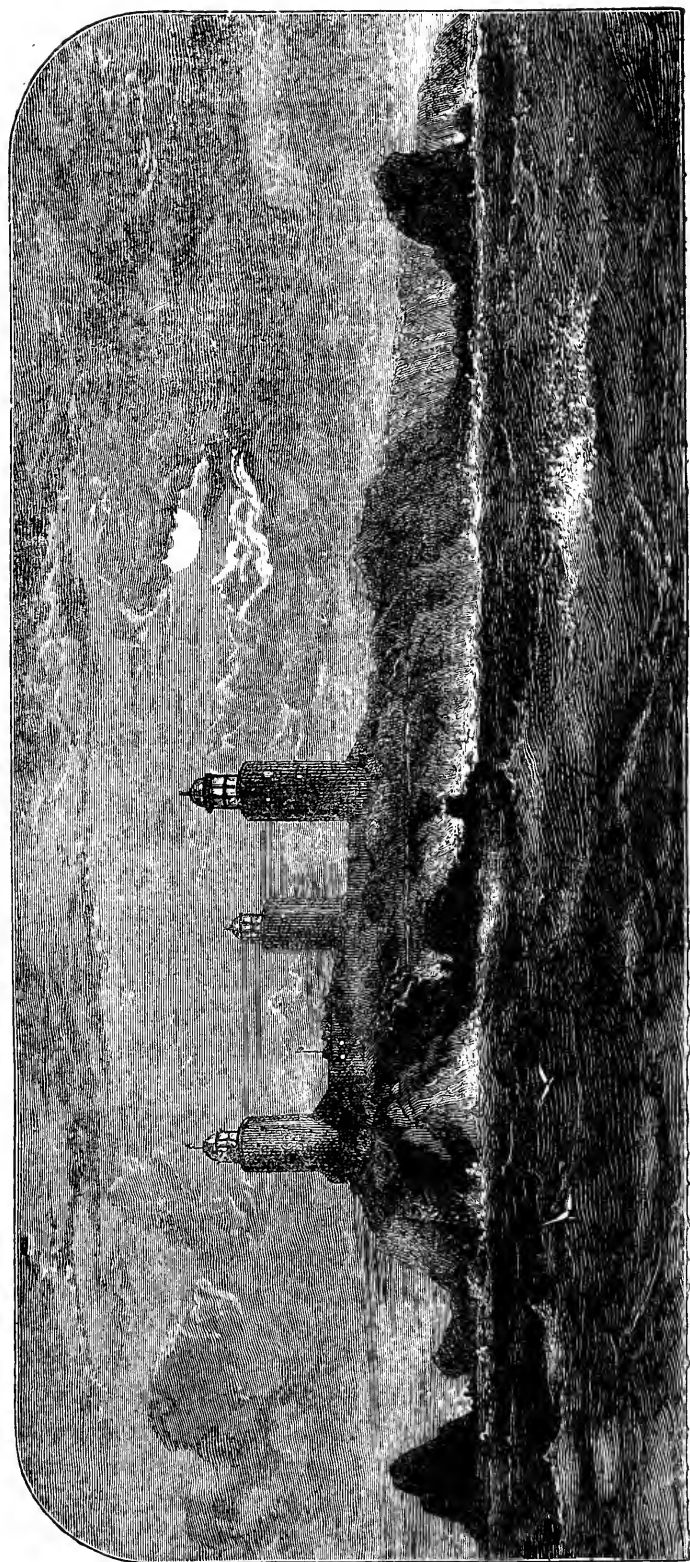
St. Brelade's Bay lies just beyond, with its heathery slopes, and again beyond that and Fret Point is the small but beautiful Portelet Bay, with its martello tower rising boldly from the rock in the centre of the crescent. Here you may sit and contemplate the grandeur of the coast, and watch the sunrisings with all the glorious colours that flame in the sky, and change, and shift, and disappear. Here vessels are constantly passing, making way for St. Heliers, and often, just as they are rounding the point and making for the harbour, you see them drop sail and glide gently into the still waters of the haven, lying under the shadow of Fort Regent.

Of the vegetation of Jersey it is almost unnecessary to speak. Everything seems to grow in abundance. Jersey pears and grapes are famous all the world over. Tropical plants grow in the open air. The tall, waving Indian grass is everywhere seen, with all its graceful motions. Flowers are gorgeous and abundant. The orange blossom scents the air of many a garden. The magnolia grows to great dimensions, and its flowers are wonderful. Loveliest of all sights in the island is the rich gorse and broom. These grow in such abundance, such golden tints, as cannot be surpassed. Neither pen nor pencil could do justice to their splendour. And again we come upon deep pools, overshadowed by tall trees and graceful weeping willows, giving long and romantic vistas, where nothing is wanted to complete the picture but the song of the nightingale.

And if the days are beautiful, so are the nights. If you are staying at some out-of-the-way inn, commanding one of the lovely bays, you may watch the moon rising in all her glory, and flooding sea and land with her pale silvery light. The water will sparkle and shimmer with countless white jewels. Now and then a small boat crosses this fairy pathway, and you trace her dark picturesque outlines as she passes under the moonbeams and disappears in the gloom beyond. The coast on either hand is distinctly outlined, and the headlands jutting out into the sea look solemn and severe. Night succeeds day and day night, and each is full of its own beauty : the one full of gorgeous, glowing sunshine and light and life and motion ; the other possessing the softness and repose of darkness, all the mystery and all the magic of the starry heavens.

We felt all the charm of Jersey in that merrie month of May, and the charm was of no light or slight description. It was, indeed, beyond description. To all was added the infinite and spiritual delight of minds "attuned to one key ;" that harmony of companionship of which all the poets have sung, and will continue to sing as long as the world lasts.

Day after day our coachman had taken us a fresh drive, lasting some six or eight hours. Day after day we had seen new beauties. Day after day, instead of contracting, the small island seemed to expand and grow larger. In our drives every now and then we would come upon lovely, long avenues, where the trees met overhead, and we traced the delicate interlacing of the branches and all their ramifications ; and the tender green of the fresh spring leaves seemed to infuse into one their own life and health and vigour, and the blue sky and the sunshine glinted and flashed as the breeze moved and rustled the smiling verdure. All nature rejoiced, and we rejoiced with her. It was impossible not to catch the spirit and tone of our surroundings. The most stricken heart must have found its sorrows subdued and brightened, whilst those whom for the moment sorrow touched not, might rise to the highest point of enthusiasm and exhilaration.



THE CASKETS.

But nothing lasts for ever, and our turn came for departing. We left with sorrow. We had had a wonderfully quiet and happy time in Jersey, without one drawback to record, one incident to regret. Uninterrupted sunshine had attended and gilded our days.

The last morning dawned, and we left with mutual regrets. The morning was brilliant with sunshine as we went down to the quay, which is far quieter at the departure than the arrival of a vessel. The little boat for St. Malo, whither we were bound, was getting up steam. Of the few passengers on board, some looked laden with the spoils of Jersey. Butter and eggs seemed in the ascendant; and yet to take butter to Normandy and Brittany would surely be as wise as taking coals to Newcastle.

Before long we had passed beyond the piers. Out on the broad water, there were innumerable rocks about our path, but we cunningly steered through them all. The sea was calm and beautiful. Never had it looked clearer and more transparent. Never had its lights and shades, the pale opal, the darker green, the deep purple, been more conspicuous. Jersey dissolved and disappeared until it became a mere dream-speck in the horizon. We had parted from it, but we still remained as a mutual consolation to each other.

"We couldn't have had a happier time," said H. "Will it be equally so in the days that lie before us?"

"I have no doubt of it," I replied. "Our happiness is very much under our own control. Given fair weather, and the spirit of adventure, combined with the novelty of new scenes and fresh faces, will compensate for the quiet charms of Jersey."

"En avant!" responded H. And on the whole, I don't know that one who in the future may pass through the stirring scenes of many a battlefield, and spur his charger to the sound of many a bugle call, could have given a better reply.



PROFESSOR LATIMER, F.R.S.

BY EMILY H. HUDDLESTON.

ONE muggy December afternoon a down train was drawn up on the platform of what we will call "Wigsby Junction." It had a slow stopping journey to make ere it would reach Clough, from whence it would dash off at express speed to Bolton-le-Moor, a run of fifty miles.

A pretty young woman in a tailor-made black gown and long bushy blue fox boa was leaning out of the window of a first-class carriage discussing a recent ball with a male chum who had come to see her off. His arm was resting on the window-sill as they cheerfully chattered, without the smallest reticence.

The lady airily remarked that she had lost all her luggage the day before, and had nothing left but a dressing-case. He inquired if a certain gold dagger, presumably a gift of his own, were among the missing effects? A turn of her head revealed it, fastening her grey tulle veil, and a glow of gratified vanity mounted to his forehead.

A thin gentleman in a frieze ulster and pair of gold spectacles, affecting to read the damp newspaper, just come down by another train, was furtively observing the little comedy. He could not decide whether or no he would enter the same carriage with the lady. Certainly not, if that blushing idiot were going too. But no. He was speaking of this as a last interview; informed her that he was going to India; and on the lady exhibiting more curiosity than responsiveness, expressed a dismal conviction that he would never return.

The thin man had nearly decided to travel with her—what an undulating figure! and despite her airy talk, what sympathetic brown eyes!

A gentleman of much the same type as the first youth now hurried up to the window where leant the circe of the blue fox boa; the last comer being evidently another partner who had received permission to see her off.

"I have been hunting everywhere for you," he began, stopping short with a crestfallen air on perceiving the other beau, who also wore an air of displeasure; but it quickly disappeared—had he not been drowning himself in those limpid eyes during a delightful ten minutes tête-à-tête? It must be over anyhow in a minute. The guard's whistle sounded. It was necessary for the thin gentleman to take his seat somewhere. He glanced again at the coveted carriage. The two young men blocked up the window. He felt unwilling to ask them to move, but could not enter without.

By such trifles are important events sometimes decided. He turned away, and got into a carriage lower down.

The four corner seats were all appropriated, and he repented himself of the vacillation which had prevented him from securing one. There was a cold north wind blowing, and he seated himself with his back to the engine in case anyone with a fanatical belief in fresh air should wish to open a window. He was already suffering from slight bronchial irritation, and had to speak at a public meeting that evening.

In fact, he was a Professor of Geology, on his way to lecture at the important town of Clough.

Having glanced through his newspaper with the air of a man who only sought to eliminate salient points, and had no time to waste on extraneous matter, he threw it aside and, opening his travelling bag, proceeded to look over his notes for the evening's oration.

But Professor Latimer had sensitive nerves, and the pair of eyes on either side of him provoked self-consciousness and a wandering attention. The note-book was laid down, and he began to take mental stock of his companions. The politely averted gaze of a gentleman in the opposite corner seemed to suggest that he might have been doing the same by the Professor. The former was a big, broad-shouldered man, with a massive forehead, reddish beard, and large, absorbed-looking hazel eyes, that focussed slowly like those of a near-sighted person.

In the netting overhead was a Gladstone bag with the name "Paul Quince" legibly printed thereon. At the next station one of the passengers got out and Professor Latimer exchanged his seat to that opposite the owner of the Gladstone bag.

A slight observation was exchanged between them, and the Professor put away his notes and leaned forward in an attitude peculiar to him, as though open to conversation. Something was said of the slowness of the mixed train in which they were travelling, and Latimer observed that it was the only one available to carry him to Clough in time to deliver a lecture that evening.

The slight, courteous answer of his vis-à-vis indicated that he was aware of the intended lecture, and of its being a special occasion at Clough.

Professor Latimer's amour propre was gratified by the reply, in its implied recognition of his fame as a lecturer, and while his heart warmed, his tongue loosened. From the doings of the scientific societies they dwelt on the great man's more immediate branch of study. Paul Quince averred that it was a favourite subject with himself. But his time being otherwise engaged, he had none to expend on the pursuit of geology. He did not explain what his profession might be, though the Professor made a half pause of interrogation. For though unable to recall ever having heard the name of Paul Quince, he felt convinced in his own mind that he was speaking to an eminent personage.

But in spite of the stranger's reticence on this point, they had

many subjects in common, and each unconsciously inspiring the other, talked his best, cementing an apparently mutual attraction.

Presently the other passengers left the train, and the two men finding themselves alone together ventured to light, one a cigarette, the other a pipe; the Professor remarking that it was a twenty-mile run to the next station.

Their sympathy, perfect hitherto, appeared not quite so complete when an unfortunate topic cropped up, and Paul Quince demurred to an arbitrary dictum of the geologist's on the subject of animal magnetism; the latter sweepingly asserting that such practices were invariably unsuccessful, except in the case of hysterical patients, and that the subjecting of such to so-called hypnotic treatment was either an iniquitous tampering with their disordered nervous systems, or an incitement to simulation and deceit.

A curious smile quivered round Paul Quince's mouth, and he paused suggestively as though unwilling to notice an illogical sophism which his companion could not have seriously meant to commit himself to.

Latimer felt nettled by the other's manner—modern psychology was abhorrent to his narrow, though acute intellect, and the very mention of hypnotism or clairvoyance was certain to arouse his combative instincts.

"I feel sure, sir," he tartly replied to the unexpressed dissent of the stranger, "that you can have no toleration for charlatanism, and must agree with me that the alleged curative powers of mesmerism and kindred agencies are a disgrace to the intelligence of the age."

"There will always," returned Paul Quince, "be rogues, who by imitation of truth, can make a living out of the credulity of fools. "Yes, truth, sir," for the Professor had shrugged his shoulders at the word. "Magnetic force is as much a fact as the nose on my face, and as interesting a ground for exploration as that of any other field of inquiry."

It was now the geologist's turn to gaze at his companion with cynical surprise. Indeed their mutual admiration had sensibly cooled in the last few minutes.

"Considering the absence of any proven useful result from mesmerism, and the triviality of clairvoyant information, I can't see where the interest comes in," opined the sceptic, bluntly.

"You have, of course, investigated the subject?"

"No, sir. My time is too valuable to admit of such trifling, except in the way of amusement, and even in that aspect the occult has no attractions for me."

Again the suppressed, half-quizzical smile that had irritated the scientist previously. "But are you warranted," said his interlocutor, persuasively, "in treating so contemptuously a subject which you admit to be *terra incognita* to you?"

"I am equally ignorant sir, of jugglery, soothsaying, thimble-rig,

card-sharpping, and similar chicanery, which, I suppose, you will allow to be beneath the dignity of a man of character and science?"

Paul Quince shrugged his shoulders in deprecation of such an analogy. "And yet," he said, banteringly, "unless I am much mistaken, you would be yourself very sensitive to hypnotism." Then observing a red spark of anger in his companion's eye, he hastened to change the subject, and, dragging down his Gladstone from the netting overhead, produced a canvas bag of pebbles and fossils.

"I should be glad of your opinion," he said, conciliatorily, "on a very curious spar I obtained from some excavations in Cornwall," handing the Professor a shining mineral. "A crystallisation of very peculiar——"

"Common enough—common enough—ordinary Derbyshire spar," growled Latimer, whose temper was somewhat discomposed.

"Pardon me, I have not yet explained in what the peculiarity consists. Indeed, it is not easy of detection, but when examining it attentively one day, I observed a hitherto unnoticed phosphorescence vibrating like liquid fire, from rose colour to violet."

The Professor scrutinised the specimen more curiously, but after poring over it for a minute, declared he could see nothing of the phenomenon described.

Quince looked disappointed. "I am confident there is no hallucination, but am such a tyro in these matters. What would I not give for the opinion of a distinguished geologist on this *lusus naturæ*!"

The Professor drew down the blind. "My left eye is painfully sensitive to a side light," he said. "I will try again."

He held the spar in the hollow of his hand, and, after a few minutes' concentrated attention, uttered a cry of delight.

A lovely roseate effulgence scintillated in the heart of the mineral, changing as he looked into a pure sea-green tint.

"Aha!" exclaimed Paul Quince, jubilantly, "it reveals itself to you also. Invisible to the casual observer, but palpable to the initiated!"

The Professor, almost inebriated with excitement, was dumbly drinking in the wondrous spectacle. Presently his eyes became strained with the tension, and the colours faded somewhat. He turned away, and effusively shook his neighbour's hand.

"My dear sir, I congratulate you on this *trouvaille*. You are indeed a fortunate man."

"But how utilise my discovery?" holding out his palm for the specimen, which Latimer reluctantly resigned. "I am ignorant as a child with a glittering bauble. It may possess occult properties. How learn to apply them?"

"I should analyse it by a process of induction," said the other, drily, protruding his lower lip, and speaking with vague pomposity.

Quince may have deduced from this reply a disinclination on the

Professor's part to assist him in the comprehension of his prize, for when the latter began cross-examining him as to the exact locality where it had been found, the owner, with a humorous twinkle of the eye, gave equally vague replies, successfully parrying the other's thirst for information, and forcing him to the conclusion that his companion wished to be the sole possessor of such a unique specimen, and had no intention of giving anybody the chance of discovering a similar one. Already the magic spar had been hustled into the bag, mixed up with other miscellaneous samples, and Quince having surprised from the Professor an admission of its value, drew his travelling cap over his eyes and subsided into the corner, as though indisposed for further conversation.

Envious and angry, but not to be outdone in indifference, the geologist also drew down his cap and feigned slumber; but his heart, only to be reached through its scientific proclivities, was palpitating with excitement at the marvel he had witnessed. His brain teemed with theories for its solution, and he longed to have the phenomenon in his own possession—to test, probe, and experiment upon by every method that experience could suggest. In imagination, after carefully noting every symptomatic characteristic, his diagnosis had been crowned with success—and oh, the glory of exhibiting and lecturing on the *rara avis* at the Royal Society in the capacity of discoverer!

But stay—it was not he, but the stranger opposite, to whom such prospects of immortality belonged. Pshaw! without geological training to interpret it, his treasure trove would be merely a curiosity. Besides, the phosphorescence was not apparent to everyone. He himself, when at first approaching it in a sceptical spirit, had seen nothing; and it was some minutes before the soft, shoaling hues had flooded his vision with lambent flame.

An irrepressible desire to obtain possession of the spar increased at the recollection, and he felt capable of parting with half his fortune if this desideratum could be obtained for money.

But then, again, a very extravagant bid might only confirm the possessor of the *lulus naturæ* in his opinion of its worth, and so indispose him to part with it. The Professor gnashed his teeth with vexation. A slight snore became audible.

"Many a man has been murdered for less," thought Latimer, grimly, not referring to the snore, and glaring at his sleeping companion. One resolute grip of the throat, and he might never wake again. It would be brought in apoplexy. He himself might stop the train (after appropriating the spar), and assist in efforts for his resuscitation —

The wicked reverie went no further. The snore was but the precursor of returning consciousness. Paul Quince yawned, stretched himself, looked at his watch, and gave a sharp glance at his neighbour.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but did I not understand that you were to get out at Clough?"

"Certainly."

Quince held up his watch. "We must have passed it half an hour ago," he said.

The Professor gave a violent start, and felt as though a cold douche were descending on his head. He had been so completely engrossed, so entirely without cognizance of all outside the commotion in his brain, that, although he may have had some vague consciousness of the train stopping, the impression had been received passively, and conveyed no meaning.

Rudely awakened by the shock of Paul Quince's words, comprehension and dismay were simultaneous. Oh, horror! the train had been express since Clough, and would not stop till it reached Bolton-le-Moor at seven! The lecture was appointed for eight, and he was previously to have partaken of a light dinner with the Mayor. He could wire from Bolton-le-Moor, but there would probably be no means of returning from thence in time to keep his engagement.

This supposition proved correct, for after poring by the carriage lamp over the "Bradshaw" politely tendered to him by Quince, the Professor made out that the next train back would not reach Clough till eleven p.m.

In this dilemma no one could have been more courteously friendly than his travelling companion.

"'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good," he said. "You have lost your dinner, and your audience their lecture, but I shall be the gainer if you will accede to my request. My house is but a mile from Bolton-le-Moor, and I trust you will do me the favour of dining and remaining the night with me."

Thus relieved from his uncomfortable predicament, the Professor was profuse in his acknowledgments. A further reference to "Bradshaw" showed a convenient train for returning to Clough, as Latimer intended wiring the Mayor to postpone the lecture to the following evening.

A renewal of rapprochement was naturally consequent on the hospitable motion of Paul Quince, and as that hideous thing—"A naked human heart," is happily for many invisible to mortal eyes, the Professor's transient murderous feelings remained unsuspected by the victim of his imagination.

On arriving at Bolton-le-Moor, after despatching a telegram to the Mayor, Latimer was conducted by his host to a small brougham in waiting at the station, and they drove off at a pace indicative of a free-going horse. It was too dark to distinguish the country traversed, but ere long the brougham turned in at a lodge gate, and in five minutes more drew up at a house of, judging by the lights twinkling in the windows, fair, but not enormous dimensions. The door was opened by a quiet-mannered man-servant, too well trained to betray the smallest surprise at the appearance of an unexpected guest. Paul Quince opened a door to the right, and Latimer was

soon warming his chilled hands by a good fire in a handsome apartment, furnished richly, if sombrely, in drab cloth bordered with purple velvet ; the walls, where visible, repeated the light drab shade in flock paper, but tall bookcases reaching to the ceiling occupied three sides of the room. The geologist, after his circulation had been restored by warmth and a glass of sherry, was ushered into a bedroom where a fire had been hastily lighted, and his dressing-bag unpacked.

While washing off the stains of travel, and assuming the dress suit he had intended lecturing in, old reminiscences crowded into the Professor's brain. Some fifteen to twenty years ago he had been well acquainted with the neighbourhood he now unexpectedly found himself in ; having been in the habit of regularly spending the merry month of May at Bolton-le-Moor with an uncle who was Vicar of the parish. Tender spring vignettes rose spontaneously to his mind—orchards, fairy-like with apple-blossom ; cowslips and golden king-cups rioting in the meadows ; rook shooting knee-deep in lush grasses ; a bend of the river on which a boat is gliding steered by a laughing girl. Could that not bad looking fellow in a straw hat bending negligently to the oar ever have been himself ?

The Professor gulped down a heavy sigh—the girl had laughed “an honest heart to gall,” or rather, to place its happiness henceforth in the pursuit of inorganic matter.

Full of these and similar memories, he was summoned to dinner in a glowing little octagon room. His host was not apparently a family man, for the circular table was laid but for two. It was lighted from above, and a subdued roseate flush fell on silver, hot-house blooms, and long stemmed Venetian glasses of the opalescent tints of soap bubbles ; silver gnomes who had apparently just dragged their loads from the bowels of the earth were salt cellars, and the whisk of a mermaid's tail revealed a pepper spray. Quaint conceits cropped up in unexpected disguise, and the host himself, in a glorified lounging jacket of amethyst velvet, which threw up his auburn beard and limpid hazel eyes, was in keeping with the prevailing fanciful effect.

But the dinner—as delicacy after delicacy, each testifying to the hand of an artiste, and accompanied by its appropriate rare and delicate wine, was carried round by the soft-footed attendant—greatly exercised the Professor's mind. Was this man sybarite enough to indulge in such repasts when alone in every-day life ? For there could have been no time for the preparation of these high-class dishes after the arrival of the travellers. Latimer was himself a gourmand at heart, but being parsimonious in his habits, seldom gratified the taste, except at the expense of others.

“Do you know,” he said to his host, while discussing an ambrosial purée de faisan à la crème, “that your invitation has made me feel a modern Rip Van Winkle ? I used to be an habitué of this

neighbourhood from paying an annual visit to my uncle, the Vicar of Bolton-le-Moor. He died fifteen years ago, and I have not been near the place since."

Paul Quince assumed an expression of polite interest, and waited for more.

"I used to know every person nearly, and every house within ten miles. But this one, though so near the station, is unfamiliar to me."

"You cannot expect to find the neighbourhood in statu quo after such an interval," responded Quince, evasively; "even among the landed proprietors many estates may have changed hands."

"To be sure, to be sure," assented Latimer, rubbing his own. "Who is at Henley Park now? How well I remember shooting my first rabbit there."

"I do not know the present possessor of Henley Park."

"And then there was the Squire of the parish—Mr. Gregory, of Beechlands—he had a large family—surely they have not died out?"

"I believe there is someone of that name still at Beechlands," returned the other, indifferently.

Latimer was checked in his flow of interrogatories. Why, Beechlands could not be more than two or three miles from his host's residence, and yet he actually was not certain of his nearest neighbour's name! It was very singular, and forced him to the conclusion that this genial, luxurious entertainer, if not a recluse, which his style of living showed no indication of, must be cut by the county.

A man of more sensitive feeling would have changed the subject, but the Professor had not yet done with it.

"And who," he asked, "occupies the dear old Vicarage now? Who is the present incumbent?"

"I cannot tell you," replied Paul Quince composedly, without affording any explanation of his extraordinary answer.

The Professor was completely taken aback, and applied himself to the discussion of the *mauviettes en aspic* just handed to him; but on raising his eyes, thought he detected a humorous gleam in those of his host. It was not the first time that he had surprised that subtle, ironical glance, and a hot spark of anger responded thereto in Latimer's breast. The polite attendant diverted his attention by handing him a telegram. It was in response to his own from the Mayor, who regretted that the Town Hall was engaged the following evening, but would be glad to wait on the Professor with a further proposition as he passed through Clough.

Latimer accordingly decided to return to London by the 9 a.m. express next morning, which would wait a quarter of an hour at Clough.

Dinner being over, Paul Quince drew aside a purple velvet

portière, disclosing an oriental-looking smoking room, with Indian carpets, divans, lounges, etc., while bronzes, statuettes, malachite, and other objects of dilettanteism abounded, as in every other room in this æsthetic dwelling. But little of these details did our Professor remark, his gaze being attracted to, and riveted on, an oil painting suspended over the mantelpiece.

It was that of a girl lying in a boat moored by a fleet of water-lilies. Her hat had fallen back, and her hands were clasped behind her chestnut head ; but in the azure eyes, looking straight into those of the spectator, and in the smile that lurked in their mocking depths, Latimer recognised a semblance of his early love.

He gazed and gazed again, doubted, hesitated, and faltered out :
"May I ask, sir, if that is a portrait?"

"It is ; that of an ancestress of mine, painted by Romney," replied Paul Quince, handing his guest a box of cigars.

Now the figure was clad in a striped shirt, and serge skirt of the most modern boating type, and the chagrined Professor had received another proof of the inutility of interrogating his host.

It did just cross his mind that the latter might be a wealthy lunatic, and the stealthy-footed butler his keeper, which surmise would account for his ignorance of the society of the place.

It was well known that except on some trivial points the insane were often capable of talking rationally enough to deceive a mad doctor. Paul Quince's foible, or loose screw, was evidently a dislike to being questioned. Even in the train he had exhibited this weakness, and had drawn into his shell, and discouraged conversation when interrogated as to the exact locality where the phosphorescent spar had been found. Pooh ! with the recollection came refutation of the absurd suspicion. Was not Paul Quince absolutely unattended in the train? No keeper, disguised or otherwise, lurked in his wake, which fact at once disposed of the insanity hypothesis. No, the cause of his eccentricity must be sought elsewhere, and the Professor's thoughts, diverted from it by recent events, rebounded to the more thrilling problem of the magic spar.

The two men had been dreamily smoking, occasionally exchanging an observation, but now the Professor's soul was be-mused in an abstraction as complete as that which had caused him to overrun his station. The more intently he dwelt on the object of his desire, the fiercer grew his jealousy that another should possess it. What a labour of love would it not be to pit science against inertia, and wrest from it the secret of the celestial fire that eluded the careless eye, but manifested itself ——

"Would you not like to see it again," asked a quiet voice.

Latimer started. "How could you tell of what I was thinking?" he stammered.

"Perhaps by thought transference, which you do not believe in, by the way." He detached from his watch chain a Brahma key, and

unlocking a small casket, took from it the glittering spar, once more handing it to the Professor.

Latimer clutched it with a feverish grasp, and eagerly concentrating his attention upon it, in less time than previously the coveted phenomenon blessed his vision.

Blessed? should we not rather say cursed? for as the Professor's eyes drank in the beautiful, baleful light, wicked and desperate thoughts were busy in his brain, and what was still stranger, his ordinary hard-headed acuteness began to desert him, giving place to schemes as wild and irrational as ever entered the head of a madman.

"What to me," he soliloquised, "is my professional career? What do I care for life itself if this marvel of geology is to be possessed and expounded by Paul Quince instead of myself? Perish the thought! The weak alone are swayed by circumstances, which the strong bend to their own purpose, with the soul to appreciate, the intellect to solve and interpret."

"Do not look at it so intently," interposed Paul Quince. "After a time the scintillation affects the optic nerve—indeed the brain, and he reached out his hand for the spar.

"Never," hissed the Professor with unconscious ferocity. But quailing beneath the calm, surprised eye of Paul Quince, as a maniac under his keeper's, he resigned the treasure to its owner with a murmured apology—accepted by a gracious gesture.

"It is unwise," he said, "to steep one's senses in this strange luminary for many consecutive minutes, unacquainted as we are with properties that may be malevolent if uncontrolled."

The Professor assented verbally though with inward derision, and noted under his bushy brows that Quince after locking up the mineral in its casket, had replaced the key on his watch guard.

The silver chimes of a clock were ringing the midnight hour.

"If you will excuse me," murmured Latimer; "I have travelled a good deal to-day and feel disposed for rest."

"Certainly," assented the courteous host, "and if you can be ready for breakfast by eight o'clock, I will send you to the station in good time for your train."

On gaining his chamber, however, the Professor seemed in no haste to undress, but threw himself into an easy-chair and gazed thoughtfully on the fire. He was resolved on one point—ere he quitted the house, the casket should be denuded of its treasure. The theft itself would be easy of execution—but after? Must he abandon his career—fly into Spain? Change his name, and esteem the world well lost in the attainment of his heart's desire?

Wherefore? Once clear of the premises, what would there be to connect him with the abduction of the spar? Who was Paul Quince that his word should be taken against the contemptuous denial of Professor Latimer, F.R.S.? The burden of proof would lie with his

adversary, who could only produce circumstantial evidence, against which would be set the high character of the distinguished Professor—well known for his disdain of all appertaining to the occult.

Of course there was danger of Quince discovering his loss while he, Latimer, was still on his journey, and exposing him to the indignity of being apprehended and searched. But even in that event, there would be nothing extraordinary in a Professor of geology carrying a specimen about him, and with "*l'audace, toujours de l'audace,*" he might face it out.

Latimer decided not to be in too great haste to put his design into execution. Mr. Quince might be a light sleeper, or addicted to burning the midnight oil, and although through the long night he felt the attracting force of the marvellous fossil, as sensibly as steel does that of the magnet, it was not till just before daybreak that the Professor prepared for action.

He had taken careful cognizance of the situation of the smoking room, and although the key of the casket was unattainable, Latimer's pocket-knife contained a few little implements that might pick a lock, supposing he were unable to detach the lid at the hinges. Carefully shading his hand-candle, he stole down stairs, traversed the octagon dining-room, and, raising the portière, passed into the inner chamber. He cast a feverish glance round—the room was enveloped in shadow, save for the limited area illuminated by his candle. Its rays were reflected by a small silver object—oh, joy! there stood the casket—so soon to be rifled of its contents. The derisive smile of Paul Quince's "ancestress" followed the Professor as he moved, but could not now distract his attention—concentrated on the deed to be done. The lock being a foreign one was unfamiliar to him, and difficult to deal with; the hinges were rusty and a further hindrance. And it was not till after ten minutes' patient manipulation that the lid rolled to the ground, and the pillager seized his prize.

Spell-bound and absorbed, unconscious of aught but a burning need to invoke the delayed phosphorescence, he was unaware of a figure moving towards him out of the gloom.

"Dog and thief," shouted a voice of thunder, "is it thus that my hospitality is requited?"

The startled Professor fell back quivering from head to foot. Then with a bound and a yell, sprang at Paul Quince's throat. The long, lean murderous fingers were closing on his windpipe, and although the more powerful of the two men, he was nearly strangled in the suddenness of the onslaught.

Next moment, however, Quince had wrenched himself free of his assailant, and hurling him to the ground, planted his foot on his throat, as on that of a writhing, venomous snake. Latimer's bolt was shot, the will without the power to harm alone remaining.

"Take my life," he muttered sullenly; "it has no further value in my eyes."

"Get up," cried Paul Quince, thrusting the recumbent form with his foot.

The disgraced Professor obeyed. The kick was too imperative to be disregarded.

"Your miserable life is safe," resumed Quince, "and if I refrain from exposing your infamy, it is that you are under the direction of an influence that, though powerless over the generous and the true, can, when in contact with a mundane and debased organism, impel it to hellish and inexpiable crime. The talisman you would sell your soul to monopolise would, with its evil promptings, have brought you to the gibbet. It is a safe possession only with those of higher aims and aspirations, and who do not look upon the aggrandisement of self as the sole end and object of their being."

Then turning upon the sullen and humiliated Professor a glance of profound contempt: "Begone," he cried, "and no longer pollute my house with your covetous and ungrateful presence."

He waved his hand, and Latimer, thankful to be released from the terrible ordeal, slunk away, and picking up his hat in the hall, wandered out into the dawn of a chill December morning.

He walked doggedly on down the drive through the wood, instinct, rather than conscious volition, directing his steps towards Bolton-le-Moor. He was thinly shod, but the road was dry enough, and on reaching the railway station he sat humbly down on a bench to wait for a train. It did not occur to him to comfort himself with a cup of coffee and mouthful of breakfast at the buffet, nor did he even draw near the fire of slack, but cowered like a beaten dog without spirit to move from the spot where he had taken refuge. He had "saved himself," as our neighbours say, in what he stood up in only, and did not remember till later that he had left his dressing-bag behind.

He could not have told if it were a long or short time that he had occupied that sordid bench, ere a porter roused him with an inquiry of whether he were going by "her," pointing to the smoke of an approaching locomotive.

The ticket-office window was drawn back with a click, and the Professor rose and took a place to London. Then entering a first-class carriage, he tumbled into a corner, and again relapsed into moody reverie.

Usually the Professor was very careful of his health, being subject to bronchial affections and liable to chills; but though he remembered having been unable to bring away his great-coat, its absence on this wintry morning gave him no concern. Presently it occurred to him that he would have to meet the Mayor at Clough, and arrange for a future lecture, and he felt for his engagement book. It was not in his pocket, and he then recollected having left it in the dressing-bag on his bedroom table in that terrible abode of French cooks, exalted hosts, disgrace and ruin; somehow the loss of his bag

seemed the greatest calamity of all. The fact echoed in his brain with incessant iteration ; but it did not occur to him that his engagement book would not be immediately required as the Mayor did not expect him by so early a train.

Presently he experienced a sudden feeling of chilliness as though a rush of cold air had entered the carriage. What a dark morning ! The lamp was still burning in the receptacle above ; another few minutes and the train drew up on the platform.

"Clough ! Clough !" shouted the porters ; "change here for ——" etc. etc.

Latimer looked out, and several hats were doffed to him. Why, surely there was the Mayor, and half the corporation at his back !

It was indeed that civic dignitary, accompanied by the lecture committee, all come to receive their Professor !

"Welcome, distinguished sir !" cried a stout, florid-looking man, rushing to the window and grasping Latimer's hand. The Mayor was a worshipper of talent, and had an ornate way of expressing himself.

It was all incomprehensible to the Professor, but his latest dominant idea was still in the ascendant.

"I have lost my luggage," he said, in dull, monotonous tones.

"You don't say so ! Where can I wire to ? What is it ?"

"A dressing-bag, which contains all my notes, and a great coat."

The Mayor gave a gesture of despair at the first loss, but glanced dubiously at a thick frieze over-all that enveloped the geologist.

"There is a bag right over the gentleman's head," observed a porter.

"Great heaven !" ejaculated the Professor ; "how did it get there ?"

"All's well that ends well," said the Mayor, with a curious glance at his guest. "Come along ; there won't be too much time for dinner."

The Professor had not heard this incomprehensible speech, his gaze being riveted on the train he had left, where at one of the windows appeared a head with auburn beard and hazel eyes, in which came a momentary gleam of drollery as their owner slightly raised his hat, and the train moved off.

"Who is that ?" screamed the Professor, clutching the porter with a terrible oath, and pointing to the still visible cause of his agitation.

"The gent as travelled with you, sir ?"

"I travelled alone the whole of the way from Bolton-le-Moor."

"Wigsby," corrected the porter ; "that there gent got in with you at the junction, and only changed to a smoker ten minutes ago."

"Come away," cried the Mayor, taking Latimer by the arm, whose strange language and wild air were beginning to attract attention. "It is but a step to my house."

The stupefaction of that civic functionary may be better imagined than described when he found that his distinguished guest had come with no expectation of delivering the lecture anticipated with such enthusiasm, and from whose demeanour he felt serious misgivings that the Professor was either on the verge of fever, or suffering from incipient softening of the brain.

However, after partaking of a good plain dinner and a bottle of champagne, Latimer pulled himself together sufficiently to be taken to the Town Hall, where, assisted by his notes, the power of habit enabled him to get through the programme without a fiasco. The chairman in proposing a vote of thanks declared they had been listening to a deeply-interesting and instructive disquisition, but it was afterwards generally remarked that the lecture had been totally devoid of the vigorous language and incisive reasoning usually so conspicuous in the brilliant Professor's orations.

The Mayor noticing the continued wandering and uneasy expression of his guest's eye, hurried him away from the Town Hall, and prevailing on him to swallow a potion sufficiently potent to ensure dreamless slumbers, had next morning the satisfaction of seeing him off with apparently recovered equanimity.

But it was on the return journey that our professor sustained a shock which accomplished the complete restoration of his faculties, while steeping his soul in impotent frenzy! In a pocket of his ulster he came upon a twisted note in unfamiliar writing, which upon being opened was found to contain the following strange communication, every sentence of which stung the recipient like whipcord:—

“PROFESSOR LATIMER,—Conceiving it a regrettable circumstance that an eminent man should be the victim of narrow-minded prejudice, I have ventured on a daring experiment. By a small ruse I induced you to concentrate your attention and gaze on a glittering though valueless crystal. In three minutes your eyelids closed, your features became convulsed, and you fell into a state of profound hypnotism. I have seldom experimented on a more sensitive organism, or on one more open to suggested hallucination! Your trance has lasted a quarter of an hour. I am now about to release you from it, and shall then change carriages, to enable you at your leisure to adjust to the more prosaic conditions of real life the suggested adventures you have passed through.

“Trusting that you will, in consideration of the novel experience you have acquired, pardon having been made an involuntary exponent of how narrow is the line of demarcation between the Seen and the Unseen, I am, with every feeling of respect, your humble servant and fellow-traveller—PAUL QUINCE.”

CARL'S CHRISTMAS.

AN AMERICAN STORY.

IT was six o'clock on a cold November evening ; snow lay on the ground ; a few flakes were falling through the clear air.

Before a mansion in Fifth Avenue a gentleman paced, irresolute ; his eye dwelt anxiously on one window in particular, across which the shadow of a woman was sometimes thrown. Presently a hand drew back the curtain, and a face looked forth into the street.

"She is not looking for me," said he bitterly. "Ah ! how shall I tell her ?"

He almost staggered as he mounted the steps to the door, and even then stood irresolute, latch-key in hand, ere he entered the house.

"Is that you, Carl ?" said a sweet voice.

"Yes ; I am late."

"Then you must make haste ; we dine out to-night."

The speaker came forward to the lighted hall : a beautiful woman, whose exquisite toilette glittered with gems. He turned from the vision with something like a shudder.

"How shall I tell her ?" he murmured, as he wearily mounted the stairs.

He rang the bell as he entered his room.

"Tell Mrs. Hyde I am indisposed. I shall not be able to accompany her this evening."

The message sent, he sat down and buried his face in his hands. His thoughts roved idly to the visions of his youth, in which he, supremely happy in a loving wife, hewed down every obstacle in his path and made himself a famous man. What was the reality, he bitterly asked himself. He had deliberately married a woman who had frankly assured him she could never love him—he had thought he could give all and demand nothing in exchange. He shuddered as he recalled the loneliness and dreariness of his one year of married life.

A knock at the door interrupted these reflections ; his wife stood there as he answered the summons, and his eyes, blinded by her dazzling beauty, discerned no new expression in the haughty face.

"You are ill ?"

He did not reply ; he stood looking down on her as one in a dream.

"Your room here is cold," she said. "It is a bitter night. Will you not come to my boudoir ? The fire is pleasant there."

He stared at her, then shook his head.

"I have often told you," he said with scorn, "that I cannot breathe in such luxurious surroundings. My tastes are simple."

She glanced round his room, which, in comparison with hers, was simplicity itself.

"Then, if I cannot do anything for you," she began —

The carriage is waiting, madam," said a servant, approaching.

"I shall return early," she said. "Au revoir."

Again he was left to his bitter thoughts. Too restless to keep still, he wandered about the house from one magnificent room to another. At length he entered the boudoir, in the furnishing of which an expensively artistic taste was visible. He cast a scornful look on the luxurious room.

"It smothers me," he muttered.

His eyes, which restlessly wandered from one thing to another, now rested on a half-finished portrait, which, short-sighted though he was, he perceived to be of a man's face. For a long time he hesitated to approach nearer—it was mean to take advantage of his wife's absence; yet as he thought thus he moved, he peered into the pictured face. He started back in intense surprise—the colour rushed over his face.

"Do you think it good?" said his wife's voice at his side. For the hours had passed, and she had returned, and he was now looking at it for the tenth time.

"I am too much surprised at your choice of a subject to be able to give a critical opinion," he replied.

"Your head makes a fine study," she remarked calmly.

He bit his lip with a cruel sense of her coldness.

"You are surprised to find me here?"

"A little. But come to the fire; you have a thoroughly chilled appearance. Stephens tells me you have not dined. I have ordered a light repast for you. You can take it here."

He was conscious of feeling cold and faint; she drew him forward to an easy-chair; and the tray with food and wine appearing as though by magic, he found himself eating and drinking at her request, and he glanced up more than once inquiringly into her eyes. He read nothing there to lighten his heart.

She took up a piece of embroidery, and sewed diligently.

"By the way," she remarked, in a casual manner, "is it true that the Middleton Bank has stopped payment? Have you not shares in it?"

He made no reply; her eyes met his with some anxiety.

"My whole fortune was invested there," he replied.

"Then you are ruined?" she said, calmly.

"Utterly."

Both were silent then. Isabel's eyes glanced round the luxurious room, then she looked at her husband.

"I suppose it will not affect any of my personal property," she

said anxiously. "You do not know, I believe, that my Uncle Aaron, who died a week ago, has left me his homestead."

"No! I was not aware of it. Where is it?"

"Oh! A farm out in the country," she replied, flushing under his intent gaze.

"You will not be destitute then, even if I fail to earn money at once," he said with keen sarcasm.

"That is well," she said quietly.

"You were frank when I asked you to marry me. You said you would do so to escape poverty—to assure yourself a life of luxury. You said I was not the type of man you could ever love."

"Have you remembered my foolish words?" asked she, flushing.

He laughed bitterly. "A man does not easily forget such words as those," he said. "On my part, I promised never to obtrude my love for you."

"I absolve you from any idea that you have ever done so," she replied coldly.

"I promised to keep you as a princess; you were only to wish, and your wishes should be fulfilled. Have I hitherto kept my promise?"

"Every tangible wish has been gratified," she said gravely.

"At least you do me justice," he said, rising to his feet. "But *now* the failure of this bank makes it impossible to me to continue my practice of forestalling your wishes."

"You will have to give up this home?"

"Certainly! It takes a princely income to keep up."

"Will everything have to be sold?"

"Everything of value belongs to my creditors."

There was silence.

"What will you do after the sale?"

"I have not had time to think. Possibly I may go out West as soon as I can make arrangements for your comfort here."

"It would be a good plan," she remarked quietly. "You appear to like an outdoor life. You enjoy farming, do you not?"

"My father was a farmer. I inherit an instinct for outdoor pursuits."

She yawned a little and looked bored. He hastily rose and went away, bitterly hurt.

"At last!" she cried triumphantly; "at last!" She sang a merry little roulade as she moved about the room. He heard it in the distance.

"She can sing when I am in such trouble. It is too cruel!"

A few days later, he found her busied in packing her trunks.

"I am going to make a few visits while you are arranging for the sale," she said. "You may not hear from me often for a few weeks, but I shall be safe and in good hands."

There was a pitiful appeal in his eyes—which might have gone to the heart of any woman—not to desert him in this bitter hour. His lips moved voicelessly, as if he would have made an appeal. She turned away and went on with her packing.

When he came back that evening she was gone. Every little token of her personal presence had vanished as though it had never been there. He received two short letters during the next few weeks : just an assurance that she was comfortably situated. As she gave him no address, he did not attempt to answer her letters.

Two days before Christmas he received another letter from her.

"I am at a village called Sharon," she wrote. "It is important to my comfort that you come to me at once. Take the train from the city which arrives here at six p.m. A sleigh will be waiting for you. Come to-morrow—Christmas eve."

He had just time to catch the train; for the letter had been delayed on its road to him. As he rode on through the gathering gloom he mused sadly enough on his future. The heart seemed gone from his efforts to begin life again. For whom should he work ? For a woman whose whole soul was wrapt up in self, in love of ease and luxury ?

"I am the kind of man no woman would love," he said to himself. "Yet I am not without the qualities which should command esteem. I am incapable of an insincerity ; to love once is to love eternally with me—should I have done the bidding of this calm, selfish woman to-night did I love her less ?"

Arrived at Sharon he was instantly accosted by a man who said he had brought a sleigh to meet him. Then he was driven swiftly for miles over the crusted snow—too moody in humour to care to talk to his silent driver.

"That's the house—where you see them lights ; she has lights in every window, I guess," said the man as he drove up to the door of a quaint, old-fashioned farm-house.

The door opened as if by magic, and Carl stumbled blindly into the lighted hall. The door closed behind him.

"Welcome home, dear Carl," said a sweet voice at his side. His beautiful wife stood there, her eyes dancing with fun—and—and—what else did this stupid Carl begin to read in those lustrous eyes ?

"Isabel !" he cried. He suddenly bent down over her—as her soft arms clasped his neck.

"Oh, Isabel ! am I dreaming ?" he cried as he clasped her close.

"Take off this wet coat," she replied, "and come into the kitchen. Do you think you could eat your supper just once in the kitchen, Carl—because you know I am going to cook it for you."

"Only tell me where we are. Is this Heaven—have we died suddenly—or am I wandering in dreams of a bliss that might be mine if—if—Isabel loved me ?"

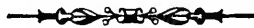
"There is no if," said she, drawing him to the glowing fire. "Oh! my love—how blind you have been. I have loved you for many a long month—but how could I tell you so—when you *would* believe I cared only for the presents you lavished on me. Carl, this is my home—and I give it to you—it is Uncle Aaron's old farm and homestead. Won't this do as well as going out West? He died leaving me this and all his immense wealth—wealth no one dreamed of his possessing."

"This is indeed a blessed Christmas eve," said Carl, unwilling to lose his wife for an instant from his sight—and following her from pantry to kitchen as she bustled about her housewifely duties.

Ah! what an hour of bliss followed the cosy supper—how much to tell, how much to hear, what arrears of loving confidences to be made up!

And what a Christmas Day was that which followed—what a truly Divine service that which they so gratefully attended in the morning! Blissfully the day sped by—and plans for the future and bright visions of the happiness to be theirs filled their cup to the brim.

God speed them on their journey onward—sorrows will pass lightly over their heads, for they love one another.



THE HARVEST OF THE SEA.

THE sky is black with angry clouds
 Just when the day is dying;
 The gulls sweep by like ghosts in shrouds
 Before the tempest flying.
 But the fish, they say, are in the bay:
 No matter then the weather!
 For all must toil to reap the spoil
 That keeps the home together.

Just like a busy hive of bees
 In bustle and commotion,
 So swarm both young and old to seize
 The harvest of the ocean.
 So blow, old wind! you are but kind
 To bring such angry weather,
 When all can toil to reap the spoil
 That keeps the home together!

GEORGE WEATHERLY.



From the Painting by R. H. Carter, R.A.

THE HARVEST OF THE SEA.

D I V I D E D.

BY KATHERINE CARR.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT CAMPER.

IF truth be known, I believe Madame Lenard was less surprised at Denise's involuntary confession of love for Raoul than Denise was herself.

She had so long fought, half unconsciously, against the feeling, that it is impossible to say how long pride would have forced her to ignore it, had she not been completely unhinged, and in a nervous state of excitability. As it was, her presentiment (for such she firmly believed it to be) raised her into that kind of exaltation which sometimes urges us to actions we should consider wildly extravagant in our calmer moments.

If it is true that much evil is wrought by sudden passions, it is none the less a fact that they also work a great deal of good. Breaches are mended, misunderstandings cleared, divided hearts brought together by these rare bursts of emotion, when it seems as if the barriers of conventionality are for once broken, so that we may be our true selves, our heart secrets laid bare, for one moment, in the light of honest passion.

Now when for some unaccountable reason Denise imagined that between her and Raoul stood the stern angel death, her remorse made it evident to her that in spite of her long resistance Raoul had conquered.

Even during that miserable autumn at Camper he had been steadily winning his way into her affections, unknown to them both.

Most women, worthy the name (and they are not so common as some people fancy), cannot refrain from attaching themselves, more or less, to anyone with whom they live for long together, sharing the same daily life, and on whom they are dependent, especially if it is one who loves them. Custom and habit are firmer cements than one realises; and if there is one proverb more than another that is often distinctly at fault, it is the hackneyed one to the effect that "Familiarity breeds contempt." Familiarity does, sometimes, teach us to condemn our own intolerance of other people's little faults and foibles, that are atoned for by virtues which our uncharitableness refuses at first to notice.

This, in a great measure, was the case with Denise de Kériadec.

Raoul's faults were external ones, the faults of youth which

outgrow themselves. It was impossible to associate long with him without acknowledging the real nobility and *largeness* of his character. But persistent snubbing and ill-concealed dislike do not draw out a man's best nature; on the contrary, they suppress it, and provoke him to smother his feelings under coldness and anger, and a bitterness that turns everything to gall.

At one time it only wanted a kind word from Denise to induce Raoul to pour out before her the whole wealth of his heart. But as she would not speak the word, in despair he sealed up the fervour of his love, with a half-desperate hope that it would die of suffocation.

But it was not only his affection and the fine traits of his character that won Denise's respect. Women are strange creatures, and are often touched where you would least expect it. With Denise, it was Raoul's *strength* that fascinated, first her imagination, then her heart.

In all he did or said there was such a vigorous element, such an overpowering personality. The strength of his passions, even of his anger, awed, and, simply from the novelty of being awed, impressed her, made her feel half proud that her husband was so much more powerful, physically and morally, than other women's husbands. It showed her her own insignificance and helplessness.

That never-to-be-forgotten night of the storm had completed Raoul's victory. She could not forget the tender strength of his arms when he carried her so swiftly up the steep cliff, a young Goliath, in whose power she was as a child. But it was too late then. She had repulsed him too far, his love for her was fast dying. So she dared not speak of the change that had come over her; and went from him in shame and anger that she had given so much as one relenting thought to a man who had grown tired of her.

All these memories returned to Denise during her long, solitary journey.

As is so often the case in retrospection, she forgot the real troubles and discontents that had weighed so heavily on her at the time, and instead of long dreary winter hours when wind and rain dulled the landscape, only recalled Raoul's goodness to her, only fair summer days when sea and land were bathed in golden glory.

She had a long night journey before her. Madame Lenard had tried to persuade her to delay her departure until the next morning. But Denise impatiently begged her not to detain her. She felt convinced that her presentiment had been sent to her for some definite purpose, and that for one thing, it imperatively urged her to return at once to Camper.

Put into words, her vision, if such it was, did not convey very much.

It was merely such a scene as was very likely to haunt her imagination after what she had witnessed the last night she was at Camper. It was a windy sea—a capsized boat—Raoul swimming for dear life, against wind and tide. His face, as she had seen it in

that transient moment, was that of a drowning man, white and haggard ; with wide, blank eyes. And this picture haunted her like a horrible dream.

"It may be that I am to be of some use in saving him," she thought, "or it *may* be that I shall find I am labouring under a delusion, and that he has been in no peril at all. If so——"

If so, the question was, how would he receive her? He could not be expected to welcome her with open arms. Possibly her reappearance would only seem to him a tactless intrusion, more of an annoyance than a pleasure.

At one time Denise would have died rather than subject herself to the possibility of an ignominious rejection of her proffered friendship. But now that she had at last allowed herself to love, it was only consistent with her impulsiveness that she should dare all, risk all, for the sake of her love. If she was to be humiliated, so be it. She deserved it. And whether or not he cared to receive her regret and love, she was determined to offer it to him, if only to prove that it was honest and sincere enough to run the chance of being repudiated, for the sake of the forlorn hope of being accepted.

She did not sleep for more than half-an-hour at a time during the whole of that long night journey. If ever she fell into a doze, she awoke at once, in horrible fear and agony, haunted, even in sleep, by Raoul's drowning face. She could picture to herself the sea in the Bay of Audierne, lashed into fury and dashing against the rocks. Do what she would, she was unable to shut her ears to the rising wind, or her mind to the vivid scenes conjured up by her overwrought brain.

There are certain days and hours in our life when we seem, with one stride, to gain greater mental and moral experience than in the ordinary course of events we acquire in several years. This was one of those periods to Denise. She felt that the very intensity of her thoughts aged her. She saw how petty, how vain, how puerile her life's interests had been, compared with the deep and vast questions that assail one when death is brought vividly before the mind. What was the use of wasting breath in futile strivings after a self-gratification, that after all is said and done is only a "vanity of vanities," counting for absolutely nothing when weighed with the long felicity of life after death? What good had she ever done to any human soul? She had accepted much love and kindness as her due, because she was blessed with beauty, youth, charm. But she had given very little in return. Perhaps it is difficult for a clever and pretty woman to avoid egotism ; it is one of her privileges, just as selfishness is that of man. And it is true that Denise had not been without a good deal of youthful arrogance in her dealings with a world which had conspired to spoil and indulge her to the top of her bent.

When she arrived at Quimper, the nearest railway station to

Camper, it was a dull, oppressive morning, with fitful gusts of a dry, unrefreshing wind. Even to Denise's unpractised eyes it was evident that a storm was brooding, and her impatience grew more and more uncontrollable.

There was no vehicle waiting at the station, so she hurried to the little inn usually patronised by Monsieur de Kériadec, and, regardless of the inquisitive glances of the proprietor and his wife at her sudden appearance, requested them to order a fiacre to be got ready with all possible speed.

Twenty minutes later, the lumbering old vehicle, drawn by its antiquated white horses with bells jingling on their harness, was brought round with a great bustle and clatter, all the inmates of the inn peering at Madame de Kériadec as she drove away, and conjecturing as to the cause of her sudden return.

"It is the way of these fine Parisiennes," said the proprietress; "they are as full of caprices as a gooseberry-bush of berries. It was a bad day for Monsieur de Kériadec when he went out of Brittany to seek a wife."

Stolid Jacques, the driver, afterwards confirmed this judgment of Madame de Kériadec by declaring that he had never before driven and hoped never again to drive so impatient and eccentric a lady. His sober old horses had started in fine style *au galop*; but only for a few hundred yards; then Jacques laid aside his whip, rounded his shoulders, settled himself in a comfortable semi-somnolent state, and let them pursue the slow and melancholy pace to which they were accustomed.

No wonder Denise fumed and fretted. Had she possessed wings they could not have borne her fast enough to satisfy her craving. In most extravagant terms she implored Jacques to urge on his precious horses, promising him *pour-boires* without limit if only he would exert himself. After each appeal, Jacques roused himself with a start, a "Bien, madame," and cracked his whip in the air; there was a feeble spurt for three minutes, then a return to that funereal and torturing jog-trot.

It was a long, desolate drive at that time of year; to Denise it had never before seemed so interminable, even when Raoul had fetched her away from Paris, an unwilling prisoner. Half-way there, Jacques insisted on stopping to change horses, during which delay her impatience could hardly be controlled; the only consolation was that the fresh horses might go a shade faster than the poor old white ones; at all events, they could not go slower.

She was still within a mile or two of the Château de Kériadec when the storm broke, and a deluge of rain beat down upon the rickety old fiacre. Denise had always had a kind of physical fear of thunder; but now she was too much occupied with other anxieties to pay much heed to it, beyond thinking, with a superstitious sinking of the heart, that the coincidence argued ill for her errand.

"Ridiculous," she said to herself; "I must have caught the Breton superstitiousness. He is probably safe at home."

How well she remembered her last drive to the Château, the clear moonlight night and silvery sea! And how different it had been in all respects from the present one! Now all was dark, wet and stormy, the sea wrapped in cloud and mist, and the Château hidden in blinding rain, except when a fierce flash of lightning lit it up in fiery splendour.

When she drew near enough to distinguish anything distinctly, Denise saw certain signs of life that did not serve to reassure her. The huge entrance door was open, Gustave, the old man-servant, and Diane, the housekeeper, were talking together in the hall with apparent excitement. When they heard the unexpected sound of carriage wheels, they both hurried to the door, and their unfeigned surprise when they recognised their mistress deprived them of all power of speech for the moment.

The instant the carriage stopped, Denise opened the door and sprang out.

"Eh bien! Diane, you see I have come back," she said, trying to conceal her anxiety. "You did not expect me, did you? Where is your master?"

"Ciel!" ejaculated Diane; "if it is not madame herself!"

Gustave, man-like, was hiding behind his wife, lest madame should direct her questions to himself.

"Tell me!" she repeated. Then, unable to contain herself, she cried: "Where is my husband? I entreat you, answer me."

"Madame—control yourself—have patience. It is not the first time monsieur has been at sea in a storm—yes—in worse storms than this, *ma foi!*"

"This? This is child's play to him, madame," put in Gustave.

"Then he is out in his boat? Where? When did he go? Who was with him?"

"It was about noon that he started. It was then calm as a mill-pond. Trust me, madame, there is no cause for alarm. He has a good head on his shoulders, has monsieur. If we looked a little bit anxious, it was not on his account. Mademoiselle Yvonne was with him. It is for her that we were disturbed, madame."

"Does no one know which direction they took?"

"Gustave has it in his head that they went towards Penmarch, madame. But who knows? One boat is much like another boat."

Denise was silent for a moment. When next she spoke she was cool and collected. The course to be pursued was as clear as daylight to her.

"You say he went towards Penmarch. He will have turned back before the storm actually began, and have been overtaken by it before he could reach Camper. It is quite evident to me what

he will do. He will attempt to come into the Baie des Nains, and so land on the other side of the promontory. That will be his action—I am convinced of it. You know what monsieur is! He is so rash that one can never count on what he will do. But, in this case, I am *certain*. *Allons*, Jacques! There is not a moment to be lost. Drive quickly towards Camper, and stop at the fisherman's cottage at the top of the cliff. Only for Heaven's sake make haste. Drive, Jacques—drive for your life!"

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Diane, as Denise drove away as suddenly as she had come; "she is incomprehensible, this young madame! One day too fine to move from the fireside with her books and her smart clothes and her little fancies! The next, flying off on a fool's errand when the sky is roaring fit to burst! What will she do next? She keeps us all alive, there is no denying that, with her caprices."

Even stolid Jacques was fired by Denise's vigour and decision, and did his best to keep his horses up to the mark. He did not quite grasp the situation, and thought madame very excitable. But he began to feel that if M^{onsieur} de Kériadec was really in danger, it was he, Jacques, who was destined to rescue him. So, with all the ardour of a hero, he cracked his whip, and shook his reins, and shouted *Hue!* with might and main until he was hoarse.

Denise had made her plans with the prompt decision of a general.

She knew that Raoul had infinite confidence in his knowledge of the dangerous shores round his home. More than once she had heard him boast that he could pilot his boat into the Baie des Nains on the stormiest, darkest night possible, and that for him the bay was as safe as his own bed.

But the chief reason of her conviction that he would make for the Baie des Nains was, that it was the very spot indicated in her vision; and not to be there on the *chance* of an emergency would have seemed to her a direct tempting of Providence. Even if Raoul accomplished the feat in safety, as he had often done before, her presence could do no harm. In that case she herself would be the only person who need feel awkward. It would be humiliating to meet him and Yvonne in such a strange, unexpected way—perhaps to be treated as an unwelcome intruder. But she was prepared to be humiliated; and having come so far on her chimerical errand, it was useless to draw back now that she was so near the end.

In a little cottage on the cliff lived one of the ablest and most trustworthy of Raoul's dependents, a fisherman called Hoël, who had been his earliest initiator into the craft of seamanship and the secrets of deep sea fishing. To Hoël Denise determined to appeal for help. She knew he was to be relied upon where "M^{sieur} Raoul" was concerned; whilst for courage and promptitude in danger he fell little short of Raoul himself.

When honest Hoël came out of his little one-windowed cottage, and saw Denise standing at his door, amidst thunder and lightning, his first thought was that a korriçan, or some other child of the elements, had come to pay him a gruesome visit. And when reassured by the very material reality of Jacques and the lumbering fiacre he recognised Madame de Kériadec, his astonishment scarcely abated. Where had she sprung from? What could she want with him now, when all weak women were best shut up in their own houses?

Denise hurriedly, but lucidly, explained her object. At the first mention of possible danger to Raoul, Hoël was all attention, quick to grasp her meaning without wasting time in asking useless questions, and ready to follow her whithersoever she chose to take him.

The situation was as clear to him as it was to her. Monsieur had gone out in his boat, somewhere in the direction of Penmarch. A storm had arisen, which would make it well nigh impossible to round the promontory. Therefore, being Raoul de Kériadec, he would probably make for the Baie des Nains rather than lie out at sea until the storm dropped.

"It may be a useless precaution on my part," added Denise, "but I have a fancy—a superstition. You, being a Breton, will not laugh at that. I want you to come with me to the Baie des Nains. It is possible that we may be of service, and there is not time to get more help from the village. Do you understand?"

"*Parfaitement*, madame. Jacques will drive you across the promontory; but beyond that the road ends. Madame will have to walk."

"Yes; I am ready. Now get in. Oh, don't hang back as if you were afraid of me. I am not too fine to drive with you. That is right. Now, Jacques, drive where Hoël bids you."

As they drove along the top of the cliff they could see the waves below washing noisily against the rocks, the spray turned into dancing blue demons by the rapid lightning flashes that rent the darkness and mist.

They were soon within sight of the Baie des Nains. Here the carriage road abruptly terminated, and a precipitous path led down to the sandy beach at the head of the little cove.

After he had helped Denise to alight, Hoël scanned the gloomy scene with his keen and practised eyes.

"Madame was right," he said after a second; "there is the *Bon Espoir*; can madame distinguish it? It is making for the bay. He is rash, M'sieur Raoul; but the saints look over him, and luck has always been on his side. Do not agitate yourself, madame."

"Quick! Let us go down," cried Denise. "Oh, mon Dieu! it is indeed my vision coming true. Quick, Hoël! or we shall be too late!"

The path was rough and steep. In the semi-darkness it was diffi-

cult to see where to place one's foot. But Denise required no aid from her companion. His opinion of Madame de Kériadec increased tenfold when he noted how active she could be in spite of her appearance of grande dame. She seemed to rise to the occasion, and however agitated she might be inwardly, she was outwardly collected, with all her faculties about her.

By the time they reached the beach, with its great boulders of rock jutting out to sea, they could plainly distinguish the little sailing-boat drawing near to the narrow inlet.

"He will be safe enough if he can manage the boat," said Hoël; "he knows every rock on the coast. Anyone else would be mad to try it."

"He *is* mad when he is on the sea. I have always said it would be his fate," groaned Denise; "cannot we get nearer to the passage in case he has need of help?"

"I can clamber over the rocks. But madame——"

Hoël glanced significantly at her long, fur-trimmed coat and delicate boots.

"Then go. Do not think of me. I will follow as best I can. Ah, my good Hoël, make haste. In a few minutes they will be in the pass—and, if he should make a mistake——"

"*Bien*, madame, I will go. But reassure yourself; monsieur Raoul never makes a mistake. Did I not teach him to manage a boat myself?"

But for once Hoël was at fault.

It is averred by many people that no man makes a mistake without a woman being at the bottom of it; and we have already seen that, in Raoul's case, if he did not actually commit a blunder himself, a woman did so for him.

Just before Yvonne made the fatal movement that dashed the *Bon Espoir* against the rocks, Raoul had suddenly felt himself yielding to the spell of her strange devotion—a devotion of which, until that moment, he had been blindly ignorant, too much absorbed in his own troubles to pay any heed to the vain fancies of his girl-companion.

If, in this momentary lapse from his self-constraint, there was even the suspicion of a faint disloyalty to the memory of his wife, his awakening was a rude one; and even during the first shock he was conscious of a vague feeling of contrition, and of vexation at his density of perception. But this was not the time for any thoughts save those of self-preservation; and though Raoul felt that there was no danger for him, he cursed himself for his rashness in attempting what he knew to be a risky undertaking when he had a woman in his charge.

Yvonne was a good swimmer, and too well inured to dangers of the sea to lose her presence of mind in an emergency. She knew, as well as Raoul did, where it was feasible to effect a landing, and

where it was not. At the spot where they had met with the accident the low rocks sloped, smooth and slippery, into the water ; without assistance from shore it would be mere waste of energy to attempt a landing there. But a little farther inland there was a narrow stretch of sand, whence Yvonne had often bathed, summer after summer ; and there, if she could swim the distance, she would be in safety. It was only a matter of physical strength, and, with Raoul at hand to render aid if her power of endurance failed, there was reasonable hope that the waves would again be cheated of their prey, as had so often been the case when Raoul was in question. He seemed, as the people of Camper said, to bear a charmed life, proof against storm and sea ; and there was a kind of fascination and excitement to the girl in the proud knowledge that she was sharing his peril, and showing him that *she* was not afraid of fighting bravely and well for her life.

When he called out to her not to be frightened, and that he would save her, her answer rang back like a cry of joy :

“Do not fear for me ; I am safe enough. I like it—I like it !”

She had the heart of a lion the little Breton girl. Though the waves thrust her back, and the surf blinded and deafened her, she fought steadily and undauntedly, with perfect confidence in Raoul, who was close at hand to save her if she gave a sign of failing breath or fainting limbs.

But there was no occasion for his help.

Hoël, leaning over the low rock, close to the scene of the disaster, was ready to drag her into safety ; a few steady strokes would bring her within his reach, and with the help of his strong arms, it would be easy for her, agile as she was, to scale the slippery rock.

When Raoul heard the well-known voice of his favourite, Hoël, and saw dimly through the beating rain two figures standing at the edge of the rock, he sent back an answering shout of glad relief. Thank God ! Yvonne, at least, would be safe. For himself, what mattered it ? A curious numbness was creeping over his limbs. Was his strength forsaking him now, on so slight a trial ? He laughed low to himself —“They will think my nine lives have come to an end at last,” he thought. “What a number of alarms I have given the good fellows in the course of my life. Ah ! Yvonne is safe. And I will not be conquered yet. Phew ! what logs my legs feel. I am going to be beaten at last, by Heaven ! Well, I must fight for it.”

Whether, as the boat capsized, he had sustained a severe blow on the head, or whether he had already over-exhausted himself by his long row, he could not tell ; probably the former. He was fully conscious that his life hung in the balance. His breath came in hard, hurried gasps. How the spray choked and blinded him ! How terribly his back and legs ached, as he struggled against the tossing waves ! Was this death ? No wonder so many brave fellows shrank from it. It was horrible to feel so helpless, horrible to be suffocated

in this way, horrible to go into the silence and darkness—young, strong, and full of life. What was that? A voice crying to him through the agony of his faintness—"Raoul! Raoul!" Who was it? It was like the voice of Denise, strangely like. And yet it could not be hers. It was only a dream—sweet beyond all dreams. Where was he, where was he?

His head reeled, all strength and life fell from him. He had only time to fling out his arms towards the rock, with a blind hope that they would reach Hoël's outstretched hands before he sank back to death and darkness; and then a deadly faintness came over him, which wrapped him in a blissful unconsciousness of pain and sorrow and life itself.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIFE OR DEATH?

It was not until Raoul was out of danger, and lying on the rock, supported by Hoël, that Yvonne fully realised the presence of Madame de Kériadec. Her first feeling of astonishment was quickly succeeded by an outraged sense of defeat, which made her veins tingle with the old bitter dislike and jealousy.

By what right was Denise here, to defraud her of her friendship with Raoul, which was beginning to have such a sweet and strange significance?

She sprang forward, as Denise moved impulsively towards her husband, and forcing her back with her strong little arms, stood between her and Raoul, as though guarding him from one who would do him an injury.

"You must not let him see you," she cried, hurriedly; "he does not know you are here. It would be a shock to him to see you so suddenly."

"Oh, have some pity," exclaimed Denise passionately, thrusting her aside; "let me go to him."

She was trembling from head to foot, exhausted in mind and body by her long suspense, and the agony of the last few minutes; and as she flung herself on her knees by the motionless form of her husband, she burst into a terrible anguish of tears.

All the dull misery of her short married life, with its follies, its vain longings, its heart-searing remorse and penitence, was poured out in that painful convulsion of sobs and tears.

Before such grief Yvonne stood silent and abashed, half moved to pity, half rejoicing in a kind of exultant sense of triumph.

"Courage, madame, courage," said Hoël, with rude sympathy. "It may not be so bad as all that. M'sieur Raoul would never be beat in a sea like this. It is nothing to what he is used to. If I carry him to my cottage, and get a dry rag on him, he'll come round fast enough, trust me."

As he altered his position, to raise his master in his arms, a spasm of pain passed over Raoul's features, and he moved, ever so slightly, opening his eyes with a faint gleam of consciousness. Denise held her breath, not daring to move. But Yvonne drew nearer, and bent over him with something of defiant possession in her manner. For a moment his eyes rested on Denise with dumb wonder and questioning; then, as Hoël lifted him in his arms, a groan of pain was wrung from between his lips, and the deadly pallor came again over his face.

"For Heaven's sake, do not move me," he murmured.

"We would take you home, Raoul," said Yvonne. "Can you bear to be carried?"

Before he could answer he had fainted again, and lay back very white and still.

"It is no use," said Hoël; "I must get assistance. For me to carry him over these rocks, alone, is impossible. If madame or mademoiselle will watch by him, I will hurry back to where the fiacre is waiting, and bring Jacques to help us."

"Yes; go quickly, quickly," said Denise, looking up at him imploringly. "Do you not see how wet and cold he is? You will come back soon, will you not, my good Hoël?"

Hoël always afterwards declared that madame had "such a way" with her, that if she chose to order a man to plunge into the Trou de l'Enfer at the Pointe du Raz, he would not hesitate to obey. The charm that had made Raoul her slave was none the less potent over the stolid heart of the rough fisherman; and when he saw her divest herself of her warm fur coat, and lay it tenderly over Raoul, he said to himself that the fine ladies of Paris had their virtues after all, and their hearts in the right place.

Yvonne glanced at the warm covering a little scornfully.

"Will it not spoil it?" she asked sarcastically; "look at the rain! you will catch cold."

"We cannot let him perish with cold," answered Denise quietly, ignoring the implied insult, and moving to take Hoël's place. But Yvonne, with jealous haste, was before her, and now with Raoul's head supported on her knees, looked up at Denise with fierce, dark eyes.

"Why did you come back? We were happy; we did not want you," she said vehemently. "You, who left him when he was in health, what right have you to tend him now?"

Denise bowed her head in silence.

"I have no right," she whispered after a moment; "I have forfeited it."

Yvonne dropped her eyes. It was her hour of triumph. In her insensate folly she imagined that the look which had passed like lightning between her and Raoul had made him hers, by the inalienable tie of mutual love. Yet, as she saw Denise standing before her, so fair and pale and sad in her new humility, she knew, in the hidden

depths of her consciousness, that her hope was but the wildest of dreams. There could be no rivalry between her, a little brown elf without wit or charm, and Madame de Kériadec, with her beauty and soft womanly graces, all those outward attractions that weak man has worshipped in all ages and will go on worshipping till the end of time.

"Why did you come?" she repeated.

"I could not help it. I felt I must see him again—something called me back to him. But I can go away. He need not know I am here. I do not want to be in his way; but I thought—perhaps——"

"No, he does not want you. How should he? You, who have made his life what it is—a burden, a mistake, a terrible mistake. Why do you not go away?"

"He is my husband," said Denise softly, still speaking with curious forbearance; "it is for him to say if I am to go away."

"We were happy enough without you," repeated the girl with a sob.

Denise's lips parted to make a quick retort; then she checked herself. It was a strange and new experience for her, to be thus humiliated to the dust: a wife who could not claim the right to tend and comfort her own husband; forced to stand aside, with most trenchant remorse, whilst her place was taken by another woman, who, for all she knew, had usurped the affection she herself had so wilfully forfeited. Poor Denise! She had no pride left now; none of the flippant indifference, the careless gaiety and mockery that had at once maddened and delighted her husband.

She felt no anger with Yvonne. Perhaps in her heart of hearts she did not yet quite believe that anyone could be to Raoul what she had been. But at Yvonne's last words, an acute and hopeless feeling of desolation came over her, like the miserable blankness of despair.

"If what you say is true," she said under her breath, "may God forgive me."

"No, He will not! He cannot," cried Yvonne, tears raining down her face; "you do not deserve to be forgiven. Oh, I hate you! You know it."

"Yes, I know it. You have always hated me, even when I tried to be friends with you. You have been hard on me at times when you might have helped me. Do you think it has all been plain sailing to me? Yvonne, Yvonne, what makes you so unkind, so pitiless, so ungenerous? Cannot we forgive each other?" she ended, laying her hand gently on Yvonne's shoulder.

The girl shrank from her touch, and lowered her sullen eyes.

"Forgive?" she murmured; "what have you to forgive?"

Denise hesitated.

"Ces choses là ne se disent pas, elles se comprennent," she said gently.

There was a short silence. Denise, with her hands clasped before her, was looking dreamily at Raoul's quiet, white face. She had wept out her passion of remorse ; she felt nothing now but a great, pure love, that seemed to flood her whole being, and raise her above all petty envy and malice.

Suddenly Yvonne stretched out her hands to her with a little moan.

"It is true that I hate you," she sobbed ; "and yet I love you for your beauty and your sweetness. It is *that* that makes me hate you so. You will not *let* me be your enemy."

"And *you* will not let me be your friend," said Denise. "Is there reason in that ?"

"You knew !" whispered Yvonne. "You knew that it was I who tried to ruin your character ; I who sent that wretched story to the journal. Oh, I was mad when I did it. And yet you never told him ! You cannot have, for if he had known, he would never have spoken to me again."

"Why should I tell him ?"

"Ah ! you are good and true and generous. I see that now. I would be your friend if I could ; but it is impossible, impossible. If I love you for your beauty, there are other reasons why I cannot like you. Perhaps I am mad—sometimes I think it must be so. And yet—and yet——"

Denise took the feverish little hands in hers.

"Poor little Yvonne," she said, in her soft, low voice.

"Hush !" said Yvonne ; "he is moving."

They were very silent, both watching with strained intensity for a sign of consciousness, of recognition from the man they loved. Then Raoul slowly opened his eyes, raising them vacantly, like one in a dream, to Denise, as she leant over him, tall and beautiful, with shining eyes.

The storm was dying away in the distance. A soft, cool rain was falling, and now and again a faint flash of far-away lightning cast a swift blue gleam across the sky.

To Raoul's slowly returning senses there was something dim and dreamlike in the misty twilight, in the shadowy face and form—so like Denise—in the strange faintness of heart and brain. Could it be—could it be anything but a dream—the sweet lips smiling so softly, the beloved eyes growing so tender, for *him* ? No—it could not be. It was but one of those radiant visions the dying so often see. Yet he smiled back to her, and gasped out his passionate longing.

"Oh, Denise . . . love me !"

"I do—I do. My darling !" she cried.

And with these words ringing in his ears he swooned away, hanging, a dead weight, in his wife's arms, that were wound passionately round him.

CHAPTER XV.

HEARTS' LOVE.

YVONNE sprang up with a bitter cry of disappointment, the outcome of her frustrated hopes, her loneliness, her craving for love and sympathy.

In her anxiety for Raoul she had forgotten that she was drenched to the skin from head to foot; but as she stumbled blindly over the rocks, towards her home, she became conscious of the icy numbness of her limbs; her teeth were chattering with cold, her head burning feverishly. She had lost all self-control. The tears were raining pitifully down her cheeks, sobs choking her breath, and her heart bursting with conflicting emotions. Once she paused to look back at Raoul and Denise. They were all in all to each other. They had forgotten her. It is the prerogative of love to be selfish, and for those two just then no one existed in the world except each other.

"Ah! how happy they are," thought the girl; "how could I have believed that his love for her could ever die?"

Then she thought she heard Denise's voice calling to her: "Yvonne, Yvonne—come back," and she sped on again over the slippery rocks, scarcely heeding where she went so long as it led away from those two in their newly-found happiness.

She had almost forgotten her old hatred and jealousy in a sudden, shamed recognition of the sinfulness of her unreasoning devotion to Raoul. By all the means in her power she had striven to widen the breach between husband and wife. And for what end? What did she expect to gain? By what perverted arguments had she persuaded herself that she could add to Raoul's happiness after he had lost the chief object that made his life worth living?

For the last months she had been living in a fantasy, wild and unthinking; buying her experience of life with the passions of an uneducated and ill-regulated mind. The awakening from her mad dream to the humiliating reality was sharp and sudden; and in the revulsion of feeling, she was prostrated with horror at her own weakness and deceit.

Stumbling and slipping over the seaweed-covered rocks, she at length reached the little path leading up the cliff close to her home.

At the edge of the cliff loomed the old Menhir, grim and ghostly in the gloaming; and here, chilled and wet as she was, she knelt for a moment and laid her hot forehead against the cold grey stone.

Her lips moved mechanically; but no sound passed through them. Words failed her. She could only offer up a mute, inarticu-

late prayer for pardon and comfort ; the passionate *mea culpa* of a heart that had broken itself against the bars of life.

When Yvonne reached her home, Mademoiselle Mathilde was knitting by the fire, in her puritanically plain and comfortless sitting-room, looking, with her severe, cold face, the personification of one of the *Parcæ* weaving the web of Fate.

But even she was startled out of her austere calm when the door burst open, and Yvonne entered, her wet clothes clinging to her figure, her wide, sad eyes glowing darkly out of the pallor of her face.

"Mon Dieu ! What has happened ? What have you been doing to yourself ?" cried Mademoiselle Mathilde, dropping her knitting. "Of all tiresome, inconsiderate girls, I have always said you are the most incorrigible. Do you wish to catch your death of cold ?"

"I have been with Raoul. We upset during the storm ; that is all," said Yvonne absently. "He is safe ; but perhaps he is going to be ill. I cannot tell. I am confused—I cannot remember."

"Ah, Ciel ! What a terrible life we lead here !" ejaculated Mademoiselle Mathilde ; "what with storms and wrecks one knows not who will be carried off next. It is like the selfishness of a man that your father should leave us here from year's end to year's end."

"Let us go away. Yes—I, too, am weary to death of being here," said the girl wildly, her cold, blue lips quivering. "I want to go away—away—far away from Camper. You are right. The life here is killing me, body and soul. Ah, yes ; you do not know. I am a wicked girl—I am not fit to live."

"*Chut, chut !* You have no self-control, no dignity. Have I not told you so a hundred times ?" said Mademoiselle Mathilde coldly. "Go and change your wet clothes ; see what a mess you are making of everything ; then I will listen to you. I have been ready enough to leave Camper this many a year. 'Tis a Godless place to live in, without society or a decent town within twenty miles of us."

"I want to live, to work, to do penitence," cried Yvonne, still speaking in a kind of delirious excitement. "It is true what I have just said, that I am a wicked girl ; you do not know how true. I want to be good. Ah, yes, that is the true happiness. Is it not so, my aunt ? Perhaps, if I repent, the good God will forgive me."

"You work ? *Bêtise !* When have you been anything but a rough, wild girl, without a thought for anyone but yourself ?"

"I can comfort the unhappy ; that at least I can do. For I, too, have been unhappy ; I can understand that. I do not care what I do. Only promise me that you will take me away from Camper ; somewhere where I shall not have *time* to think."

"There, there ! Go and change your clothes. You are talking mere folly. But as for going away, I am ready enough to listen to that suggestion when you are fit to speak about it calmly."

That night, before she went to sleep, Yvonne Hévin knelt, as

usual, at her little Prie-Dieu, gazing out of the window towards the Château de Kériadec, whence the beacon light gleamed through the darkness. And to-night, when her prayers were ended, she remained on her knees for a long time, wrapt in thought, before she spoke the old, simple benediction which for years had been her last words before she went to sleep.

Suddenly she lifted her face, with a smile on her lips, and all the passion gone from her eyes.

"*Dieu les bénissent,*" she whispered softly.

Is there much more to add? I think not.

We know that Denise had not humiliated herself in vain.

Raoul's love for her was not dead. It was locked up, tight and secure in his heart, never to escape; though years might have taken from it the freshness and delight, just as dried rose-leaves lose their colour and fragrance.

Curiously enough, in spite of the apparent shipwreck of his domestic happiness, he had always clung to a secret hope that after all things would some day be righted. He had felt it ever since his parting from Denise, when she had burst into tears, and cried out that she did not want to go to Paris now that the time had come. For one moment he had felt a dim consciousness of power over her, of a husband's superiority and strength over a frail and delicate woman.

Their love had passed through the refiner's fire, and came out thence purer, brighter, more steadfast. No longer were they divided but joined together by the most tender trust and confidence.

"*Hearts' division*" had passed into "*Hearts' love.*"



THE PACHA'S SNUFF-BOXES.

SOME half-a-dozen years previous to the sudden collapse of the Napoleonic dynasty in 1870, a certain sensation was excited in Paris by the arrival in that city of an Oriental potentate of ambiguous nationality, but popularly known and spoken of as "The Pacha." Whether he came from Turkey or from Egypt was regarded as a matter of comparatively small importance; the two essential points in his favour were, first, that he was undoubtedly the possessor of an immense fortune; and secondly—no slight recommendation in the Lutetian capital—that he spoke French with tolerable fluency. As a matter of course, so desirable an acquisition to Parisian society became the lion of the hour; and no sooner was it ascertained that a spacious hotel overlooking the Parc de Monceaux had been engaged and furnished for the reception of his Excellency and suite, than a shoal of visitors, official and non-official, hastened to inscribe their names in a book deposited for the purpose in the porter's lodge. Every day brought a fresh instalment of signatures, until before a week had elapsed, the list threatened to rival in length the traditional catalogue of Leporello.

Hussein Pacha—an assumed title, I fancy, but the one by which he was generally known—was short and corpulent, of sallow complexion and reserved manners; he spoke little, but what he did say was concise and to the point. He was extremely observant, but chary of expressing his opinion of what he saw or heard; only one instance being recorded of a temporary departure from his habitual taciturnity. Having been persuaded by a member of the French Jockey Club to accompany him to the opera, he was escorted between the acts by his cicerone to the foyer de la danse; thereby occasioning great excitement among the ladies of the corps de ballet, many of whom doubtless anticipated that, in accordance with Eastern customs, the ceremony of throwing the handkerchief would be revived for their own especial glorification. Nothing of the sort, however, occurred. After a very cursory glance at the assembled sylphides, and a muttered ejaculation which sounded remarkably like "*Manches à balai*" (broomsticks), the visitor turned abruptly on his heel, and curtly intimated his desire to return to his box.

A few minutes later Count —— was startled by a sudden display of animation on the part of his companion, who was gazing with absorbed attention at an enormously stout lady occupying the entire front of one of the stage boxes.

"Ah, la belle femme!" enthusiastically exclaimed the Pacha. "Look, is she not superb?"

"H'm," replied the Jockey Club exquisite, hardly able to repress a

smile, "that is a matter of taste. Does not your Excellency think her perhaps on the whole a trifle too voluminous?"

"Jamais trop, monsieur!" indignantly retorted Hussein; "jamais trop!"

After a sojourn of three months in Paris, the Pacha, who had employed a considerable portion of his time in a practical study of the latest inventions and improvements, scientific and mechanical, with the view of introducing them into his own dominions, announced his intention of breaking up his establishment, and returning to the East. Before doing so, however, he was desirous of expressing his acknowledgments in the shape of a suitable present to certain officials of high standing who had been particularly serviceable to him in his researches; and consulted his secretary, an intelligent young Frenchman, on the subject.

"Monsieur Morin," he said, after explaining his project, "it seems to me that the simplest way would be to send a few thousand francs to each of them."

"Pardon me, your Highness," objected the secretary, "if I venture to remind you that a present of money would be considered a breach of etiquette, and consequently resented as an insult."

"You French are very singular people," observed the Pacha. "With us, no matter how rich a man may be, he is not fool enough to refuse piastres when he can get them. What, then, would you advise me to do?"

"May I be allowed to suggest," replied Morin, "that an object of artistic value would be a fitting token of your Highness's goodwill. A gold snuff-box, for instance."

"The very thing," said Hussein, approvingly. "Where are such articles to be found?"

"At Dorr's, in the Rue de la Paix."

"Good. Let him know exactly what I require, and see that he is here precisely at twelve to-morrow."

On being admitted into the Pacha's presence, at the appointed hour, Monsieur Dorr produced, among other specimens of his handiwork, a gold snuff-box, exquisitely finished, and encircled with moderate sized diamonds, the interior of the lid bearing the jeweller's name engraved in microscopic characters. Hussein examined it minutely, and inquired the price.

"Four thousand francs, your Highness," replied Dorr.

"I will take it, on condition that you engage to supply me with seventeen other boxes, exactly similar to this."

"Impossible, monseigneur," said the jeweller; "I have only six of this pattern in stock. Still," he added after a moment's reflection, "I might perhaps be able to manage it. May I ask how soon your Highness intends leaving Paris?"

"In a fortnight from to-day."

"That will be quite sufficient. The six snuff-boxes shall be delivered this afternoon, and they can be distributed immediately. In a few days six more will be ready, and I think I can promise the remaining half-dozen before the time fixed for your Highness's departure."

On the following day the six boxes, each accompanied by a complimentary letter, written by Morin and signed by the Pacha, were duly transmitted to the privileged individuals heading the list. Towards the end of the week, the jeweller reappeared according to promise with a second instalment of another half-dozen, which were also forwarded to their destination; and before the fortnight had expired, five more snuff-boxes were in his Highness's possession.

The Pacha expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the prompt execution of his order. "It is evident," he said, "that the recipients of my gifts are highly pleased, for I have received most flattering letters from all of them except one."

"Except one, did your Highness say?" anxiously inquired Dorr.

"Yes. My secretary informs me that one of the gentlemen at whose house my present was left is absent from Paris, which accounts for his silence, and that he is not expected back until Sunday, the day after my intended departure. But," continued the Pacha, "how is this, Monsieur Dorr? You have brought me only five boxes! Where is the sixth? It is absolutely essential that no one on my list should be neglected."

"Your Highness may rest assured that your orders will be implicitly obeyed," replied the jeweller. "If Monsieur Morin will kindly acquaint me with the name and address of the person for whom the box is destined, it shall be delivered to him on Wednesday without fail."

"Exactly similar to those, of course?"

"I can safely guarantee, monseigneur, that there will not be a shade of difference between them."

"Very good," said the Pacha; "I rely on your punctuality. My secretary will pay you the seventy-two thousand francs, and on my next visit to Paris you will probably hear from me again. Au revoir, Monsieur Dorr."

If anyone, endowed with the peculiar faculties of Asmodeus, had penetrated some ten evenings later into the small room forming the back shop and private sanctum of the well-known jeweller of the Rue de la Paix, he would have been enlightened as to certain supplementary adjuncts to the ordinary business carried on by Monsieur Dorr. He would have seen that estimable tradesman seated at a table, on which were lying six gold snuff-boxes bearing a suspicious resemblance to those recently purchased by his Highness the Pacha, and carefully polishing each in turn with a silk handkerchief.

"They all come back to me again, every one of them," muttered Monsieur Dorr, with a self-satisfied chuckle, while delicately removing

a speck of dust from the last of the half-dozen. "No one ever keeps them long, for snuff-boxes are locked-up capital, and everybody, from Napoleon downwards, knows the value of ready money. They discover my name inside the box, and naturally bring it to me ; and, as I treat them liberally, I am safe to see them again. A very fair fortnight's work, I must say," he added, consulting an open account book, in which the following statement was legibly inscribed :

To sale of eighteen gold snuff-boxes at 4,000 francs each	Francs. 72,000
Deduct from above commission to secretary ("sharp fellow that, by the way," parenthetically soliloquised Monsieur Dorr), at 50 francs per box	900
To re-purchase of eighteen snuff-boxes from their owners at 2,000 francs each	36,000
	<hr/> 36,900
Total net profit	<hr/> 35,100

"Not to mention," pleasantly summed up the jeweller, "that the snuff-boxes are ready for a second edition of the little game, when ever another Pacha happens to come this way."

CHARLES HERVEY.



A MÉSALLIANCE.

I HEAR sweet music, rich gowns I wear,
 I live in splendour and state ;
 But I'd give it all to be young once more,
 And steal through the old low-lintelled door,
 To watch at the orchard gate.

There are flowers by thousands these ball-rooms bear,
 Fair blossoms, wondrous and new ;
 But all the flowers that a hot-house grows
 I would give for the scent of a certain rose
 That a cottage garden grew !

Oh, diamonds that sparkle on bosom and hair,
 Oh, rubies that glimmer and glow—
 I am tired of my bargain and tired of you !
 I would give you all for a daisy or two
 From a little grave I know.

E. NESBIT.

ANNE DENNERY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A SECRET OF THE SEA."

IT was about ten o'clock on a certain morning in late autumn when Mr. Plimmer, one of the travelling auditors of accounts in the employ of the South-Northern Railway Company, alighted from the train at Oakroyd station. He was a tall, lean, saturnine-looking man, between thirty and forty years of age, with a hard, dry manner, a somewhat rasping voice and a thin-lipped, close-shut mouth which few people ever saw lighted up with a smile.

The duty of Mr. Plimmer and his four or five co-workers was to travel from station to station, and audit the various ledgers, returns, cash statements and other matters of account pertaining to each ; and afterwards to draw up a report embodying the result of their examination, and forward the same to the chief office in London.

Oakroyd was what is commonly called a roadside station, which is equivalent to saying that it accommodated no more important centre of population than a fair-sized village and its surroundings. The station-agent was a middle-aged and refined-looking man, John Dennergy by name ; who, together with a youth to book passengers and attend to the telegraph instrument, and four porters, comprised the entire staff of the station.

John Dennergy had been a station-master for a considerable number of years, and consequently was well acquainted with Mr. Plimmer. Having nothing to fear from the most thorough inspection of his books and cash matters, he could afford to meet the dreaded official with equanimity. All the same, he would much rather that his visit had fallen on some other day, being just then somewhat upset by certain domestic circumstances of an unpleasant kind. However, there was no help for it.

"I will be with you in three minutes," Mr. Plimmer," he said. "The down train is just signalled."

"All right, Dennergy," answered the other. "Don't hurry yourself. I know where to find what I want." And with that he crossed the platform, carrying his black bag in one hand and his umbrella in the other, and made his way to John's office.

At Oakroyd, as at so many other country stations, the offices and the station-master's living-rooms were comprised under one roof. The former were two in number, one of them being the booking-office, and the other the room in which John transacted the multifarious indoor duties connected with his position. This room had three doors, one of them opening on to the platform, one connecting it with the booking-office, and a third which gave access

to the living-rooms. The upper half of this latter door was of glass, so as to light the rather dark passage on which it opened, but it might almost as well have been made wholly of wood, seeing that the glass portion of it was shaded by a red moreen curtain.

When John Dennery entered the office he found that the auditor had a couple of ledgers open on the desk before him, and was comparing and checking sundry totals therein against a sheet of figures which he had brought with him from head-quarters.

"I see that your daughter still lends you a hand now and then with your ledgers," said Mr. Plimmer. "At least, I judge the feminine writing which I find here and there to be hers."

"Yes, sir, that's Anne's writing," answered the delicate-looking station-master, whilst a vivid spot of colour flamed for a moment in each of his cheeks. "My eyes have been rather weak of late, especially by gaslight, and if it had not been for her help, I hardly know how I should have managed sometimes to get my accounts sent in to date."

John seated himself at the writing table and proceeded to open the letters and invoices which had arrived by the morning train. Mr. Plimmer, his hard-set face and keen eyes bent over the ledgers, went on with his checking. For a little while nothing was audible save an occasional rustle of paper or the monotonous scratching of a pen.

At length the auditor shut up the ledgers and turning to John, said: "And now, Mr. Dennery, if it's convenient to you, I will run through your goods-cash and floating balance before beginning on the tickets and parcels."

John rose with alacrity. He was confident that his cash would be found correct to a fraction. Having first handed the cash-book to the auditor, he proceeded to open the safe and produced therefrom a wooden bowl half-filled with money—gold, silver and copper being mixed together. The bowl contained the cash received by John on account of the conveyance of goods-traffic between the noon of the previous day, when he had made his last remittance to bank, and the time of Mr. Plimmer's examination. The cash in question would be expected to tally with the total of the sums entered in the cash-book. Five minutes sufficed to satisfy Mr. Plimmer that it did so.

Having written his initials in the cash-book, Mr. Plimmer returned the bowl and its contents to John. "And now for the floating balance," he said.

It here becomes needful to explain that what is termed the floating balance is a sum of money kept in hand in order to meet the various disbursements and liabilities which arise from day to day; the amount, of course, varying in accordance with the exigencies of each particular station. Thus, while at some places as much as a thousand pounds, or even more, is allowed, at the smallest class of stations ten pounds is deemed amply sufficient to meet all demands. At the

close of each month vouchers for all amounts which have been paid out during the preceding four weeks are forwarded to the chief office, in return for which an equivalent amount of cash is sent to the station, so as to bring the "balance" up to the total of the sum allowed.

The amount allowed John Dennery as floating cash was forty pounds. Two days before Mr. Plimmer's visit he had received from head-quarters the sum needed to recoup him for his last month's disbursements. The total of the vouchers he had paid out in the interim came to four pounds fifteen shillings, so that, in order to make up his forty pounds, it was requisite that he should be in a position to produce in cash thirty-five pounds five.

John went to the safe for the second time and brought out in one hand a number of vouchers pinned together and in the other a canvas bag containing the money. These he placed before Mr. Plimmer, and then went quietly back to his work at the table. Silence reigned for five minutes.

At the end of that time Mr. Plimmer turned and faced John. "There seems to be something wrong here, Mr. Dennery," he said. "Either you have not given me the whole of the vouchers, or else not sufficient cash. The two together, instead of making forty pounds, make only fifteen."

A mistake indeed! John was by his side in a moment. "The vouchers come to four pounds fifteen," he said. "I went through them myself yesterday afternoon, and the balance of thirty-five pounds five was in the bag at the same time."

"Ten pounds five is all the bag now contains. On the face of it there is a deficiency of twenty-five pounds."

Without a word more John emptied the bag and counted the contents for himself. Silver and copper together counted up to two pounds five shillings, which with eight sovereigns, the remaining contents of the bag, made up the sum specified by Mr. Plimmer.

John ran his fingers through his sparse hair, and stared at the auditor like a man distraught. Then he made a dash at the safe, and going down on one knee, he ransacked every corner of it in some faint hope of finding the missing gold. Then he rose to his feet with a great gasp, and confronted Mr. Plimmer. "It's unaccountable—altogether unaccountable," he stammered. "I balanced myself up only yesterday afternoon, and there was then thirty-three sovereigns in the bag. I counted them twice over."

"Has the key of the safe been out of your keeping in the interim?"

"Not for a moment. I never allow anyone to have access to the safe but myself."

"Then, as you say, it is altogether unaccountable," remarked Mr. Plimmer in his driest tone. And with that he took out his official note-book and proceeded, in his slow, deliberate way, to make an entry or two therein.

John had mechanically resumed his seat. His mind was in a whirl of amazement and perplexity. Ten minutes before, had he been in the habit of laying wagers, he would willingly have wagered a thousand pounds to one that Mr. Plimmer would have found his cash right to a penny. But now——! He must be the victim of some monstrous hallucination, he told himself. Had the missing amount been spirited out of his safe by enchantment? It was certainly there yesterday, and just as certainly the key had never been out of his own keeping.

Then all at once a terrible suspicion pierced the confused maze of his thoughts like an arrow tipped with flame. He rose without a word, and left the office by way of the door which led to his own rooms. Both sitting-room and kitchen were empty. The twins were at school, and Anne had gone into the village to make some purchases. Passing through the lower rooms, John went upstairs to a certain drawer in his bedroom in which he kept the duplicate key of the safe—a second key being allowed by the company in case the first one should get lost, mislaid, or stolen.

His suspicion was confirmed. The key was not there. It had been stolen, and who could the thief be but his own son, Launce, with whom he had had such a terrible quarrel only last evening.

Yes—he saw it all now. Launce had purloined the duplicate key in the course of the evening, and, later on, when the rest of the household were in bed, he had made his way into the office, had opened the safe, had taken twenty-five sovereigns out of the bag, had re-locked the safe, and, some time in the course of the night, had quitted the house, taking the money with him. Anne had told her father at breakfast that Launce's bed had not been slept in, but John, with the scene of the evening before fresh in his mind, had expressed no surprise.

He stood staring into the empty drawer for a little space, then he turned and left the room, and went downstairs with the dazed, stony glare and automatic movements of a man walking in his sleep. When he next came back to a full consciousness of time and place he was standing in the tiny hall downstairs, and Anne was just coming in from her errands.

The moment she saw his ashen face and twitching lips, and his wide-open eyes in which, just then, shone no light of recognition, she dropped her parcels and sprang to his side.

"What is it, father?" she gasped. "Are you ill, or have you heard bad news? Come in here and tell me."

She opened the sitting-room door and drew him gently in.

At her bidding he seated himself on the little chintz-covered sofa, and Anne sat down beside him.

"What is it, father?" she asked, taking one of his nerveless hands in both hers.

Then speech came to him.

"Your brother has robbed me," he cried in the high, quavering voice of one whose emotion is overmastering him. "He has stolen twenty-five pounds belonging to the company. The auditor has discovered the loss, and I am a ruined man—ruined and disgraced!"

At the last word he broke down. Bending forward, he covered his face with his hands, and the next moment Anne saw the tears welling from between his fingers. Never had she seen her father so profoundly moved.

II.

JOHN DENNERY was a widower and the father of four children. Of these Anne, his only daughter, was twenty-two years old, while Launce was two years younger. Then, at a long interval, came the twins, Barty and Teddy, who at the time of which we write had attained the mature age of eight. Their mother had died when they were two years old, since which time Anne had taken her place as far as it lay in her power to do so. She had inherited her mother's firmness of will, and as she grew up her father had gradually fallen as completely under her mild rule—a rule which made itself felt, but never found expression in words—as he had been in years gone by under that of his wife. For John Dennery was one of those men who feel within themselves the need—although they may be only half conscious of it—of having a stronger personality than their own to lean upon and derive support from.

Without being exactly handsome, Anne Dennery was very pleasant to look upon. She had fine eyes and a winning smile. Hers was one of those faces in which goodness and intelligence seemed happily combined; the one you felt instinctively; the other you recognised and accepted by the time you had been a quarter of an hour in her company.

By great good fortune, Launce Dennery at sixteen years of age had been found a position in the bank at Perrydene, a town about a dozen miles from Oakroyd. Everything had gone well with him till about a year before the date of our story, at which time reports began to reach his father of the late hours he kept, of his fondness for cards and billiards, and of the dubious company he consorted with after business hours. Heretofore he had been in the habit of spending most of his Sundays at home, running over by train on Saturday evening and returning early on Monday morning; but now he allowed a month, and sometimes longer, to elapse between his visits. His father took him sharply to task, whereupon he made liberal promises of amendment, and as no further reports reached John, the latter became once more easy in his mind. But, as it turned out afterwards, the improvement had been more apparent than real, the only change in Launce being that he now did in secret that which he had done openly before.

It was a terrible blow to John when one day the news reached him that Launce had been dismissed from his situation at the bank. There was nothing serious alleged against the young man; he was simply informed that his services would no longer be required. It was not till a week later, by which time he had spent the greater part of the salary which had been paid him on his dismissal, that he had appeared at home. Then had ensued the scene between father and son of which mention has been made.

John Dennery was mild-tempered to a degree and slow to anger; but, like most men of his calibre, when once roused his passion was apt to carry him away and to cause him to pass the limit which a stronger-minded man would have imposed on himself. Launce, who had long wished to go abroad, had begged hard for enough money to pay his passage to the New World and to find him in food and lodging for a few weeks after landing. To this request his father had answered:

"I utterly refuse to help you in any way. Now that you have disgraced yourself, it matters not to me whether you go abroad or stay in England; but in neither case need you look for money from me; nor, after to-night, will this roof be your home."

And so the two had parted in mutual anger.

If the younger man, instead of flinging out of the house in a passion as hot as his father's, had gone to his sister, and had told her all that had passed, that wise counsellor would have bidden him keep out of his father's sight for the next twenty-four hours, and leave the rest to her. Or, if John Dennery, instead of saying, "I refuse to help you," had said, "I cannot help you, because I have not the means of doing so," none of the after trouble, in all probability, would have come to pass.

When Launce Dennery preferred his request for money to take him abroad, he was under the full belief that his father had what, for a man of his income, might be deemed a very considerable amount put away. Till within a year before, Launce had often taken a sly peep at his father's bank-book, for John never thought of locking anything away from his children, and the young man had not failed to notice that as often as the monthly pay-day came round, so surely was the amount increased, though it might be only by a pound or thirty shillings at a time. Neither had he failed to remember that on the last occasion when he peeped into the book the amount standing to his father's credit was something over a hundred and thirty pounds. Thus, in asking for help to carry him abroad, he had felt that he was asking for no more than his father was in a position to grant, if only it should please him to do so.

But what neither he nor Anne knew, or suspected, was that of the hundred and thirty pounds which had stood in their father's name a year before, not one farthing was now left. The fact was that John Dennery, like many thousands of other small capitalists, had been

allured by one of those specious advertisements with which the newspapers abound from day to day into investing the whole of his savings in the stock of a certain bogus company, which professed to guarantee its shareholders twelve per cent. to begin with, and held out the additional bait of a prospective bonus at the close of each year. One dividend John did receive; but a month or two later the company collapsed, and as far as the shareholders were concerned, nothing was saved from the wreck. It was a heavy blow, but John kept his own counsel, and breathed no word of his loss to anyone. It was the first time that he had had a secret from his daughter.

III.

HER father's announcement was a shock to Anne Denncry such as in the whole of her young life she had never experienced before. Her brother Launce, whom she had never ceased to love in spite of his faults, a—— But no, she could not speak the hateful word, even to herself! And then the ruin and disgrace which her father had said must surely follow! It seemed like some horrible nightmare or ghastly phantasmal dream. But there were her father's tears, and the sobs he could not repress, to lend a terrible emphasis to his words. Presently, her arm stole round his waist, and she drew his head down till it rested on her shoulder, where her warm, soft cheek nestled against it, which, of itself, was infinitely soothing to the stricken man. She felt that he would be calmer and better for having given inarticulate vent to his feelings, and for some minutes neither of them spoke.

At length Anne said: "What makes you think, father, that it was Launce who took the money?"

John had grown calmer by this time. "Because no one but he had the means of obtaining access to the safe. The duplicate key which I kept upstairs is missing." And with that he went on to tell her what we know already.

With a little shiver at her heart, Anne called to mind the fact that she had heard her brother's footsteps descending the stairs sometime in the middle of the night, but had been too sleepy to do more than vaguely wonder what he could be doing out of bed at that untimely hour.

Presently she said: "What will the auditor do now that he has discovered the loss?"

"His first step will be to report the affair to the head office. Tomorrow, or next day, will come an order for my suspension. A few days later I shall be summarily dismissed the service—dismissed, too, without a character, which, at my time of life, means nothing less than utter ruin."

"Supposing you were to explain by what means the money is missing?" said Anne, tentatively.

"The first effect of that would be to cause the detectives to be put on your brother's track ; and the result, if he were taken, which in all likelihood he would be, a sentence of penal servitude."

A little cry of dismay broke from Anne.

"No ; vile and unprincipled as your brother may be, I cannot do that," continued John. "How could I bear to meet his mother in the next world with that on my conscience ? He is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone, and I must take on myself the burden of his guilt."

"But, father, why not make up the deficiency before the auditor sends in his report ? You have been saving up for years—you have more than once told me so—and there must surely be more than enough in the bank to cover the sum taken by Launce."

A deep flush overspread John Dennery's features as he falteringly and hesitatingly told the story of his loss. Ah, how bitter a confession it was for a father to have to make to his child !

After sitting awhile in silence, Anne rose. The twins would be home from school presently, and no preparations for dinner had yet been made. "Father," she said, as she stooped and kissed him, "don't let us give up hope. All may yet be well. This may be sent us for a trial, and——"

"If anyone else than Launce had taken the money," broke in John ; "anyone else than he !"

John Dennery went back to the office, where he found Mr. Plimmer still busy at work. John had been away about half an hour.

"Well, Mr. Dennery, and what have you succeeded in making out about the twenty-five pounds ?" asked the auditor in his dry, precise voice.

"Nothing, sir, nothing," answered John, with a dejected shake of the head. "All I can say is that the money was there yesterday afternoon, and that it's not there now."

"Also that you are not in a position to account for its disappearance ?"

"Also that I am not in a position to account for its disappearance."

Mr. Plimmer pursed up his lips, but no sound came from them. Then, without further comment, he resumed his work.

The day wore on. There was nothing much doing at the station during the afternoon, so about two o'clock John took his hat and stick and went for a solitary walk in the meadows. His head ached and his heart was inconceivably sore. Indoors he felt stifled. Solitude and the open air would do something towards reviving him. It was about half-past two when Anne, excited by a feeling of curiosity which she could not have explained, went softly along the passage which divided the house part from the office, and applied her eye to a tiny hole in the curtain which shaded the upper half of the door. This hole.

which her father was quite cognisant of, Anne used for ascertaining whether her father was engaged with anyone, thereby saving her from intruding upon him except when he was alone. Looking through it now, she had a full view of Mr. Plimmer, who was standing with his back towards her, busily writing.

Presently he brought his task to an end, and then, while the few last lines he had written were drying, he made ready to take a press copy of the document. Could it be the report, Anne asked herself, of which her father had made mention?

As soon as Mr. Plimmer had taken the press copy, he proceeded to tear it out of the book, and then hung the wet sheet over a gaspipe to dry; after that he enclosed the original in an envelope which he had previously addressed. Taking the envelope and its enclosure between his thumb and finger he then left the office by the door which opened on the platform.

The moment he was gone Anne entered. Through the wire blind of the side window she could see Mr. Plimmer walking up the platform towards Mark Izod, the foreman porter, who was standing at the far end talking to a stranger. It was the work of a few seconds for Anne to snatch the copy off the gaspipe, and read what was impressed thereon. The communication was addressed to one of the leading officials of the line, and ran as under:—

“DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to have to inform you that my investigation at this station has brought to light a deficiency of twenty-five pounds in the floating balance, which Dennery, the agent, is either unable, or unwilling, to account for. My audit is not yet completed, but, as far as I have gone, the rest of the accounts and cash matters appear to be correct. I presume that you will at once send someone to take over the charge of the station. Meanwhile, I await instructions. Yours respectfully,

“W. B. PLIMMER.”

When the auditor came back, three minutes later, the office was empty and the press copy, to all appearance, exactly as he had left it, except that it was now dry. He folded it up and put it with his other papers in his black bag, which he proceeded to lock. Leaving the bag where it was, he went out and accosted Mark Izod for the second time. “I’m going into the village,” he said. “Should Mr. Dennery inquire for me, tell him I shall be back in about an hour.” With that he went.

Scarcely was he clear of the station before Anne came out of the house and went up to Mark.

“Did Mr. Plimmer leave any message for my father?” she asked.

Mark told her the message. Then she said: “What was it he wanted to see you about the first time?”

“He gave me this letter,” answered Mark as he extracted the document from his jacket pocket, “and told me to be sure to give it

to the guard of the 3.20 up—and I'm due off duty for my three hours' rest twenty minutes before that time," added the foreman-porter with an aggrieved air.

"If you like to entrust me with the letter, I will see that it is forwarded," said Anne, her heart beginning to beat painfully.

"Thank you, miss. I should be glad if you would." And with that he handed her the letter.

She put the fatal missive in her pocket and went back indoors. Presently her father came in from his walk. His nerves had in some measure recovered their tone, but his features had a strained and worn expression which was new to them, and there was a look in his eyes which made his daughter's heart ache.

Anne gave him Mr. Plimmer's message, and then she said: "Father, if the money could be made up before the auditor's report reached the head-office, would it not save you from being suspended?"

"If—my dear—if. Where's the use of talking in that way? The money cannot be made up."

"But just to assume for a moment that it could."

"In that case I don't know what might be the result. Nothing more than a reprimand, perhaps. Of course the one great thing is to make up the money—that done, I could pull through everything else. But, as I said before, where's the use of talking?" He sighed deeply and went away into the office.

Anne sat for a long time without stirring, one hand clasped tightly in the other. Her lips were hard-set and for the time every atom of colour had died out of her face. Was there no way of saving her father?

Then she answered her own question by telling herself that there was one way, and one only, by which it could be done. It would cut her to the quick, it would humiliate her as she had never been humiliated before, to have to do it; but not to do it meant more, far more, than any suffering which the doing of it might subject her to. Should the worst come, for herself she should fear nothing. She knew that she could always earn her living, if not in one way, then in another; but she knew equally well that she could never earn enough money to keep her father and the two children in however humble a way. Her father was too advanced in life and knew too little of anything outside the sphere of railway work to allow of his even hoping to obtain another situation, besides which there would be the indelible stain on his character. No home other than the workhouse stared them in the face, and she knew full well what that meant. For her father it meant a broken heart. It would kill him as surely as if he had been the victim of some fatal accident.

"It must be done. There is no other way—none," said Anne at length, with a sob in her voice, as she rose and went about her household duties, the light of a great resolution shining in her eyes.

The 3.20 up-train came and went in due course, but did not take Mr. Plimmer's report with it.

When five o'clock came, Mr. Plimmer put away his books and papers. Turning to John, he said: "I shall sleep at Perrydene to-night, and be back here soon after nine to-morrow. By that time, Mr. Dennery, you may perhaps be in a position to explain what has become of the missing cash."

John shook his head. "I am sadly afraid, sir, that I shall not be able to give you any more information in the morning than I have given you already."

"It is an unfortunate affair—most unfortunate," answered the auditor. "That is my train, I believe, just coming in."

John went about during the rest of the evening like a man in a dream. He found it impossible to settle down to any of his ordinary work in the office. He attended to his duties on the platform, seeing the trains in and out, almost as though he were an automaton, going through a pre-arranged series of movements. Over everything there rested an air of unreality. He found it impossible to realise in thought that a few days hence the station he loved so well, where his two little boys had been born, and where his wife had died, would, in all likelihood, know him no more—that in fact he might no longer have a roof to call his own. How would he be able to bear it when the time came?—how live through it all?

When it was dark Anne put on her hat and jacket, and merely telling her father that she had an errand in the village, she went out and shut the door softly behind her. Her heart was sore within her. Never in her life had such a task been set her as that which confronted her to-night. She walked quickly, looking neither to right nor left, seeing no one, going over and over again that inward struggle which never ended but to begin afresh. Every minute or two her set lips moved, and anyone who could have listened might have heard her heart say the same words not once, but many times: "There is no other way—there is no other way!"

She went right through the village till she reached a new red brick house at the further end, which stood a little way back in its own grounds, and was evidently the abode of someone tolerably well-to-do. Passing through the shrubbery, Anne went up to the front door and rang the bell. "Is Mr. Cleghorn at home?" she asked of the servant who responded to the summons. Having received an answer in the affirmative, she said: "Will you please tell him that Anne Dennery is here, and wishes to speak to him."

Two minutes later she was shown into the room which Mr. Cleghorn designated his study. Half an hour later she left the house, carrying a tiny parcel tightly clutched in one hand.

There was a short way home through the fields, and she turned in by the stile which led to it. At that hour it was as lonely as a road could be; but Anne had no fears; utter solitude was what her heart

was crying out for. She sped along the narrow path which was faintly outlined in the starlight, a strange confluence of emotions at work within her, which alternately swayed her this way and that. At one moment a sort of pathetic gladness held possession of her. Her father was saved, their home would not be taken from them, on the morrow the black cloud which had threatened to engulf them would vanish into thin air. A few moments later a shudder would go through her from head to foot when she called to mind the price at which she had bought all this. How hard and cruel life seemed! a terrible enigma of which death alone held the key.

When about half-way home she came to another stile, at which she stopped to rest for a minute or two, but scarcely had she come to a halt when her over-burdened heart gave way. There, in the darkness and solitude, with the soft whispers of the night wind coming and going about her, she wept unrestrainedly till there were no more tears to shed. As she went on her way again she blessed the darkness, which covers up so much that all of us would fain keep hidden.

On reaching home she let herself in, and went at once to her room. Then, having bathed her eyes and smoothed her hair, she took the tiny parcel in her hand and went down to her father. He was seated in his usual corner by the fire, in a dejected attitude, his pipe, which he had allowed to go out before it was half-smoked, held loosely in one hand. He took not the slightest notice when Anne entered the room; she could not tell whether he was conscious of her presence or not. Going behind him, she laid one hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"Father," she said, speaking with a little catch in her voice, "there is the money: twenty-five sovereigns, which a friend has been kind enough to lend us. You will be able to give them to the auditor in the morning, and—and now that the money is made up, of course everything will come right, and we shall have nothing more to fear."

John Dennery stood up, staring at the little packet of gold which Anne had placed in his hand, and then letting his gaze travel to his daughter's face. His lips moved, but no sound came from them.

IV.

It was a certain Mr. Silas Cleghorn from whom Anne Dennery had borrowed the twenty-five pounds.

Mr. Cleghorn was about forty years old, and was a builder in a large way of business. His office and works were at Perrydene, to and from which place he went most days, either by railway or gig. By a combination of energy and shrewdness, he had worked his way up from the position of bricklayer's assistant, till now, those who knew most of his affairs averred that he could not be worth less

than twenty thousand pounds. He was not a hard-hearted man by any means, but in all his dealings through his life he had been in the habit of getting full value for his money, and as much more as he possibly could. He was not at all averse from doing a kind action, especially if it were one which showed well in the eyes of the world, but he looked for an equivalent of some kind in return. If one of those to whom he had done a kindness could show his gratitude in no other way, the least he could do was to blow Mr. Cleghorn's trumpet with might and main. If there was one thing he disliked more than another, it was having to hide his light under a bushel.

Such was the man who, on stepping out of the train one day at Oakroyd station, slipped, fell, and twisted his ankle. He was carried into the station-master's rooms, and upwards of a week elapsed before he could be removed to his own house, during which time he was waited on by Anne Denmery. He had long since persuaded himself that it was time to think of taking a wife, and he had not failed mentally to appraise sundry spinsters and widows of his acquaintance, all of them more or less well dowered, without, however, being able to decide which of them he should honour by asking her to become Mrs. Cleghorn, and by graciously consenting to consolidate her fortune with his own. But he had not been laid up more than three days before he had made up his mind, not without a sharp wrench to his pride, to ask the station-master's penniless daughter to become his wife. As his eyes followed her about admiringly he would murmur to himself: "That's the young woman for my money! She shall be Mrs. C. before she's three months older."

Not often in his life had Silas Cleghorn been baulked of anything he had set his heart on, but he was in this instance. It is enough to say that he proposed and was rejected, somewhat, it may be, to John Denmery's secret disappointment, who would dearly have liked to see his daughter mistress of the Mallows, with her own carriage to drive out in and her own servants to give her orders to. All things considered, Mr. Cleghorn took his rejection in very good part. "Young girls don't always know their own minds," he said, with a short, hard laugh, and a lowering of his heavy brows. "I shan't take your answer as final, Miss Anne. I'll try my luck again in three months' time."

"It won't be any use, Mr. Cleghorn—indeed it won't," Anne had responded.

"I'm none so sure of that. At any rate, I'll wait and see."

The three months of which he had spoken had not yet come to an end.

And it was to this man that Anne had gone to seek the help she knew he was so well able to afford, if only he were so minded, and which she knew not where else to look for. Of the interview between the two it is not needful that we should speak in detail.

Mr. Cleghorn saw his opportunity, and he did not fail to seize it. He would not have been the man he was had he omitted to do so. He agreed to advance the money on one condition, and on one only. If, at the expiration of two months, the sum were not repaid, Anne Dennergy was to become his promised wife. There was no other possibility of saving her father. Disgrace—ruin—the workhouse : her vivid imagination bodied forth the whole direful sequence. She seemed to feel the clinging arms of Barty and Teddy round her neck, and their warm kisses on her cheek. Could she ever forgive herself should any harm happen to them? There had been a few moments of silent, bitter communing ; then turning to Mr. Cleghorn, her eyes charged with a pathos more expressive than words, she had simply said :

“ I agree to your terms.”

It was only a week ago that Harry Inglis had asked her to be his wife, and if she had not said Yes, neither had she said No. It was only the thought of her father and the twins, and the duty she owed to them, which had kept back the word she would fain have spoken, for she loved Harry better than he knew. But now her little romance, of which the first pages had seemed so sweet, was shut for ever, and her heart cried out in anguish that it should be so.

Anne had still the intercepted report in her keeping, and through all her more personal troubles, her conscience kept pricking her with doubts as to how far she was justified by the circumstances of the case in acting as she had. So overpowering did these doubts at length become, that she went down to the platform when the first up-train was due, soon after six o'clock in the morning, and herself gave Mr. Plimmer's report into charge of the guard.

That official arrived in due course shortly after nine o'clock. “ Ah, Mr. Dennergy, I see that you have good news for me,” he said the moment he set eyes on John.

“ Yes, sir ; the best of news. The money has been found, I'm thankful to say. Here it is in the safe, sir, if you'll be good enough to verify the fact.”

“ It is no part of my duty to ask you how you have come by the money—whether you had mislaid it for the time being, or whether it was lost in reality—it is sufficient for me to satisfy myself that it is there. But it is a pity, a very great pity, that it was not forthcoming before I sent in my report. However, Dennergy, you may rely upon my doing my best to smooth matters over for you.”

He spoke in a more sympathetic tone than the other had believed him capable of. John looked at him with grateful surprise.

Mr. Plimmer went at once into the next office, where was the telegraph instrument, and himself despatched the following message to the official to whom his report had been addressed :

“ See my report of yesterday. Cash forthcoming this morning. Wire instructions.”

In the course of half an hour came the following reply :

"No report to hand re Oakroyd station. At a loss to know your meaning. Return by first train and explain."

Mr. Plimmer, in great perturbation, went in search of Mark Izod, but the foreman-porter happened to have gone into the village to collect an account, and as the next up-train was presently due, he was compelled to bottle up his indignation and take it away with him. A quarter of an hour later he was gone, but not without having scattered a few crumbs of comfort before he went. He would do all that in him lay for an old servant like Dennery, he said, whom heretofore he had found so straightforward and correct in all matters affecting the Company.

It was on Wednesday evening that Anne Dennery went to the Mallows to see Mr. Cleghorn, and it was on the following Friday night, between eleven and twelve, that she was roused from one of her sorrowful reveries by the noise of something thrown against her bedroom window. Her candle had been extinguished some time, and naturally she was a little startled ; but she rose at once, opened the casement, and looked out. Then she saw someone below, in the starlight, whom for the moment she failed to recognise.

"Don't be alarmed ; it is I—Launce," said a voice, in semi-tones. "Open the door for me, but on no account let my father know I'm here till I've had a talk with you."

Anne hurried on a few clothes and admitted her brother. She was so moved by what he had to tell her, that, late as the hour was, she insisted on calling her father.

What Launce had to tell was to the following purport :

He admitted at once that it was he who had taken the twenty-five pounds, and that he had obtained access to the safe by means of the duplicate key. But when he took it he felt fully confident in his own mind that the loss of it would cause no serious inconvenience, believing, as he did, that his father had close upon a hundred and fifty pounds put away in the bank. His intention had been to go out to the Diamond Fields where, like five out of every six young men who go there, he hoped before long to make his fortune and to be able to recoup his father twenty times over the amount he had now taken. On his way to the port from which he had intended to sail, the train in which he was travelling had come into collision with another train, the lamentable consequences being that several people were killed, among others being two in the same compartment with Launce. Strange to say, he had escaped with nothing more serious than a severe shaking and a few bruises. So overcome, however, was he with the dreadful scenes of which he was perforce a spectator, and so impressed was he with the providential nature of his escape, that the moment he could get away he had turned his face homeward, intent only on restoring the money and begging his father's forgiveness. Of the twenty-five pounds taken by him he had brought back

twenty-three, the remainder having been disbursed for fares and expenses.

Over the thankfulness of John Dennerly we will not linger—thankfulness not merely for the restoration of the money, but in that his son had been taught a lesson he was not likely to forget as long as he lived; for it is almost needless to add that Launce was thoroughly shocked when he learnt how nearly his reckless act, to call it by no harsher term, had proved the ruin of his father.

Anne Dennerly's heart was chanting a pæan of joy when in the golden autumnal light of the following evening she took the path through the fields on her way to the Mallows to repay Mr. Cleghorn his twenty-five pounds. It had grown dark by the time she set out on her return. By the strangest chance in the world, when she reached the first stile, who should be leaning over it but Harry Inglis. Of course he could do no other than offer to see her through the meadows. As to what passed between them on the way the present deponent has no authentic knowledge; all he can vouch for is that when at length Anne reached home her brother stared at her in surprise.

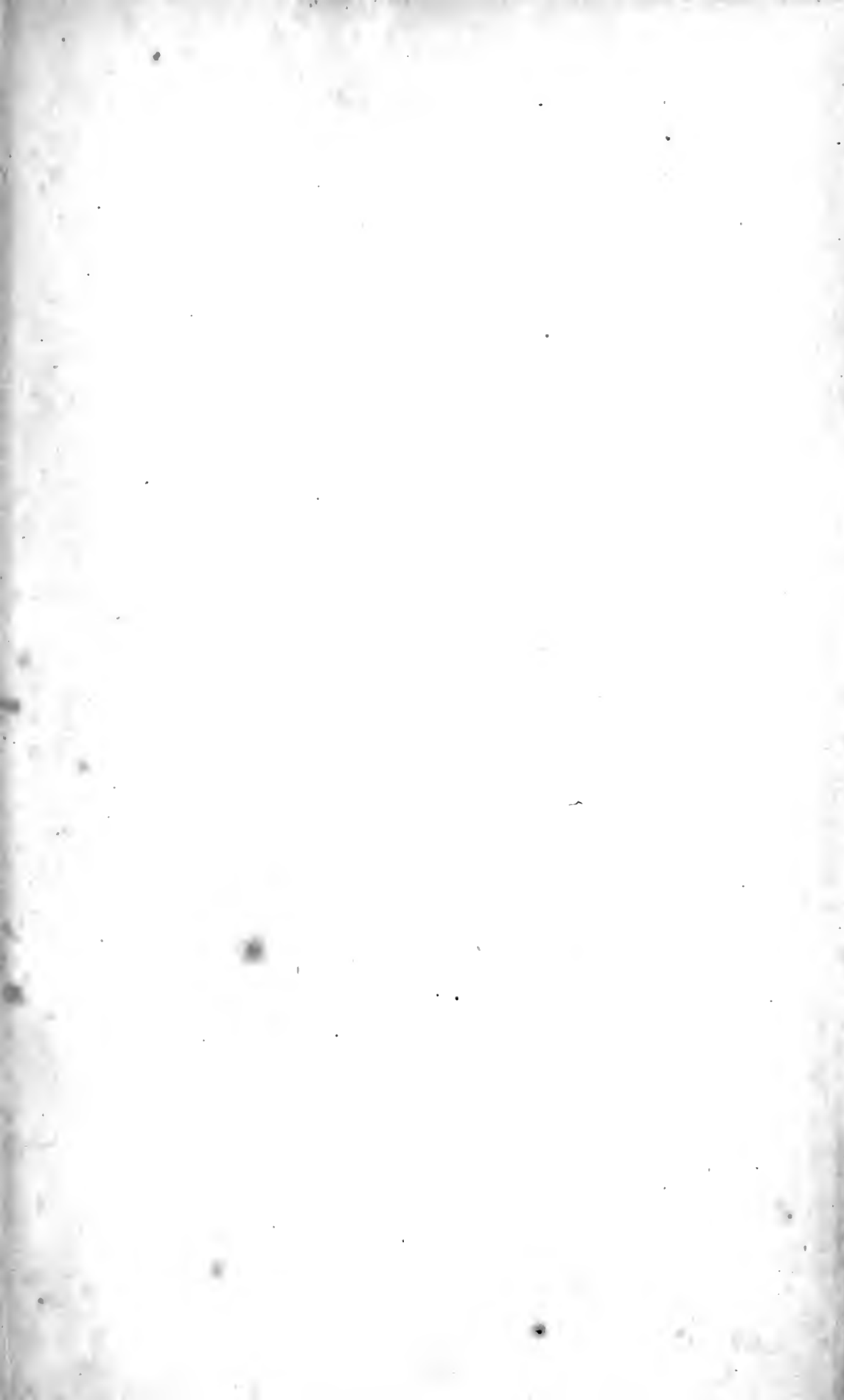
"Why, Nance, what ever's the matter with you," he exclaimed. "I never saw you with such a colour before."

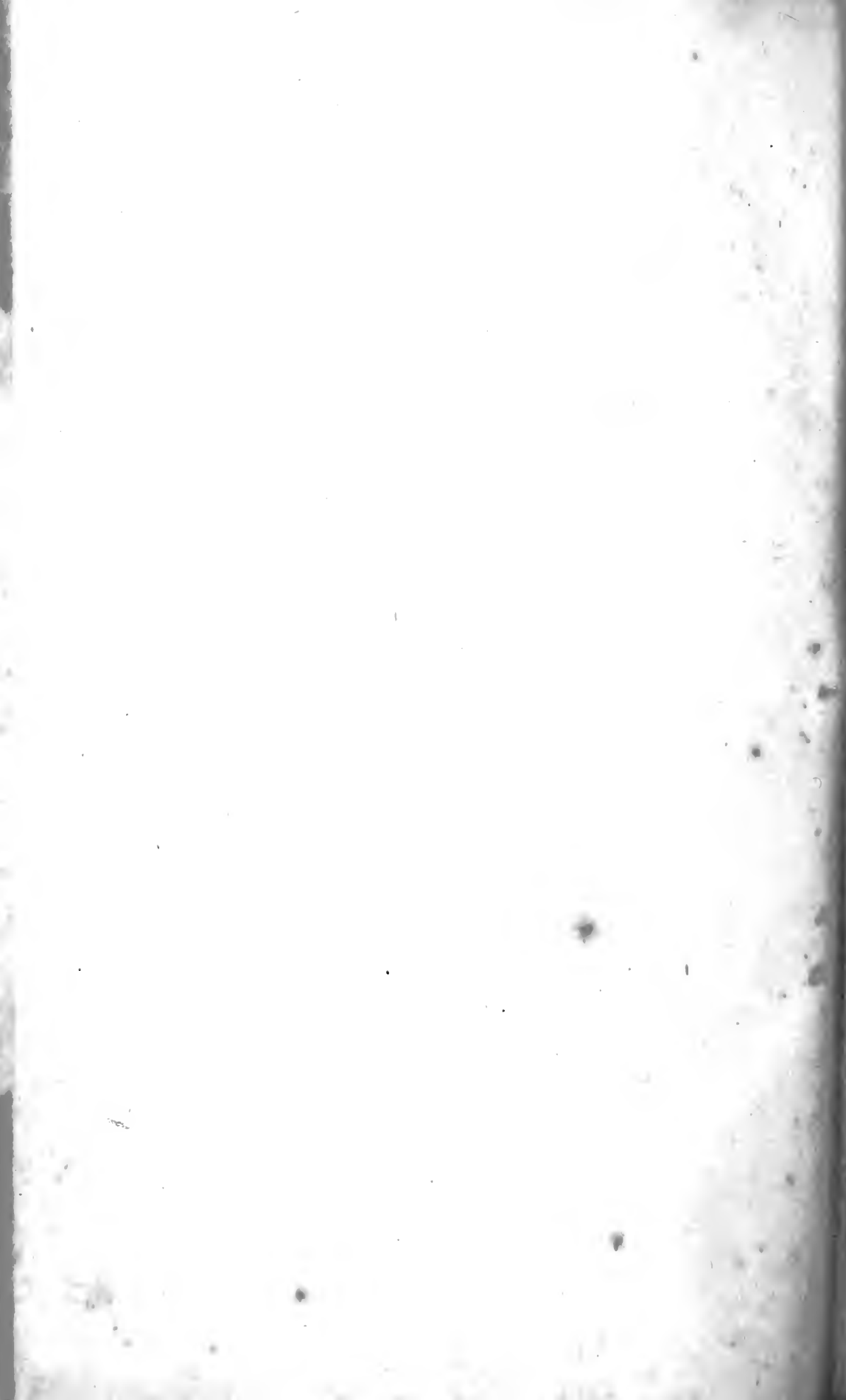
John Dennerly was summoned to attend at the manager's office on the following Tuesday, and there asked to explain how it happened that he was not in a position to produce his cash balance in full when called upon by Mr. Plimmer to do so. Then John, knowing the man he had to deal with, made a frank confession of all the circumstances of the case.

"You can go back to your station as soon as you like, Dennerly," said the manager good-humouredly when John had brought his narrative to an end. "I think it is scarcely necessary for me to impress upon you the need for taking better care of your duplicate key in time to come."

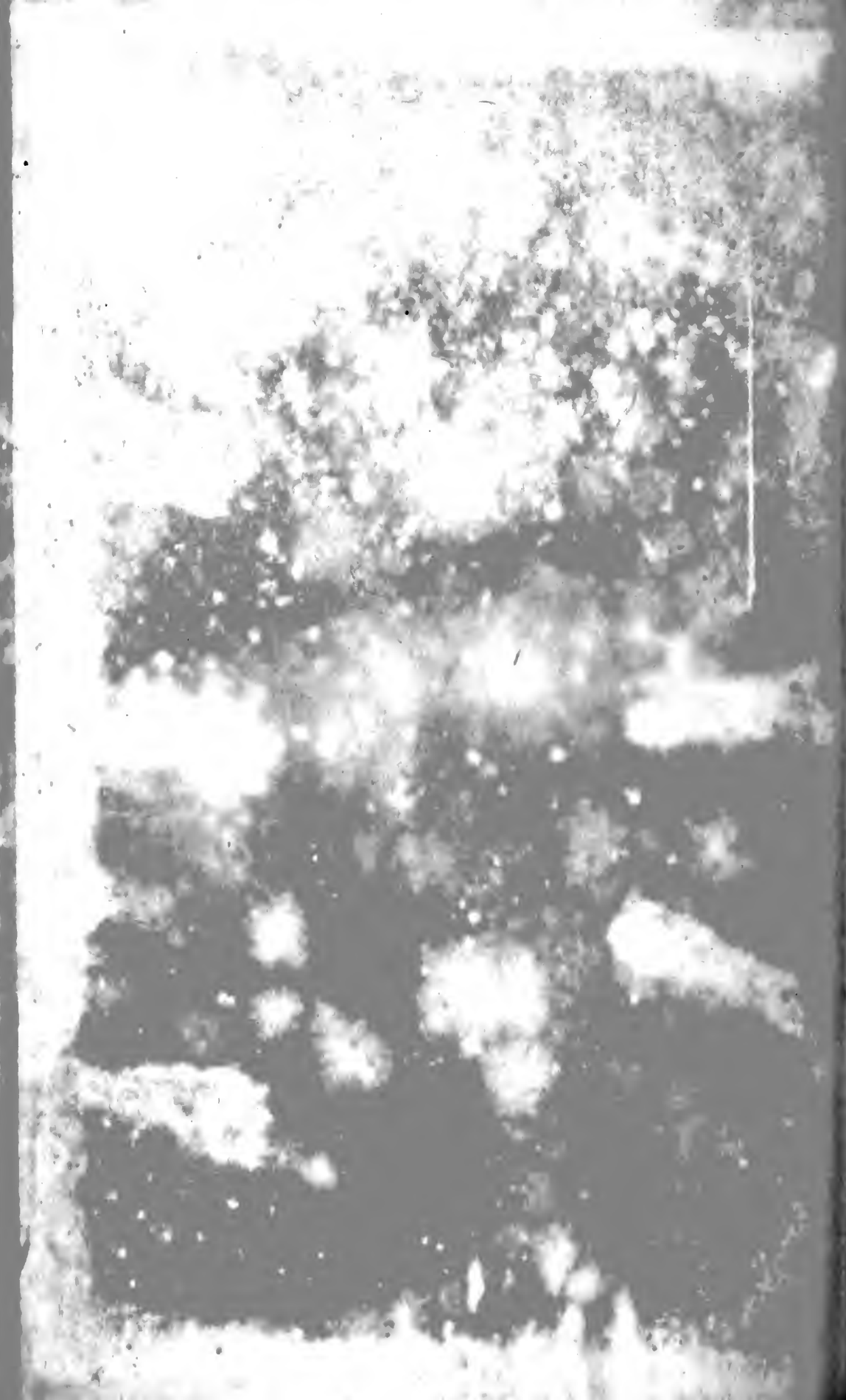
Launce, in the course of a month or two, found another situation, since which time, as he says of himself, he has "turned over a fresh leaf." Nor does there seem any present likelihood that, except in memory, he will ever turn back to that blotted page, from which, for his ultimate good as it proved, he was compelled to learn so severe a lesson.

E.









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The Argosy

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